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The Sadhana and The Sadhya

(The Means and the End)

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Swami Dayananda

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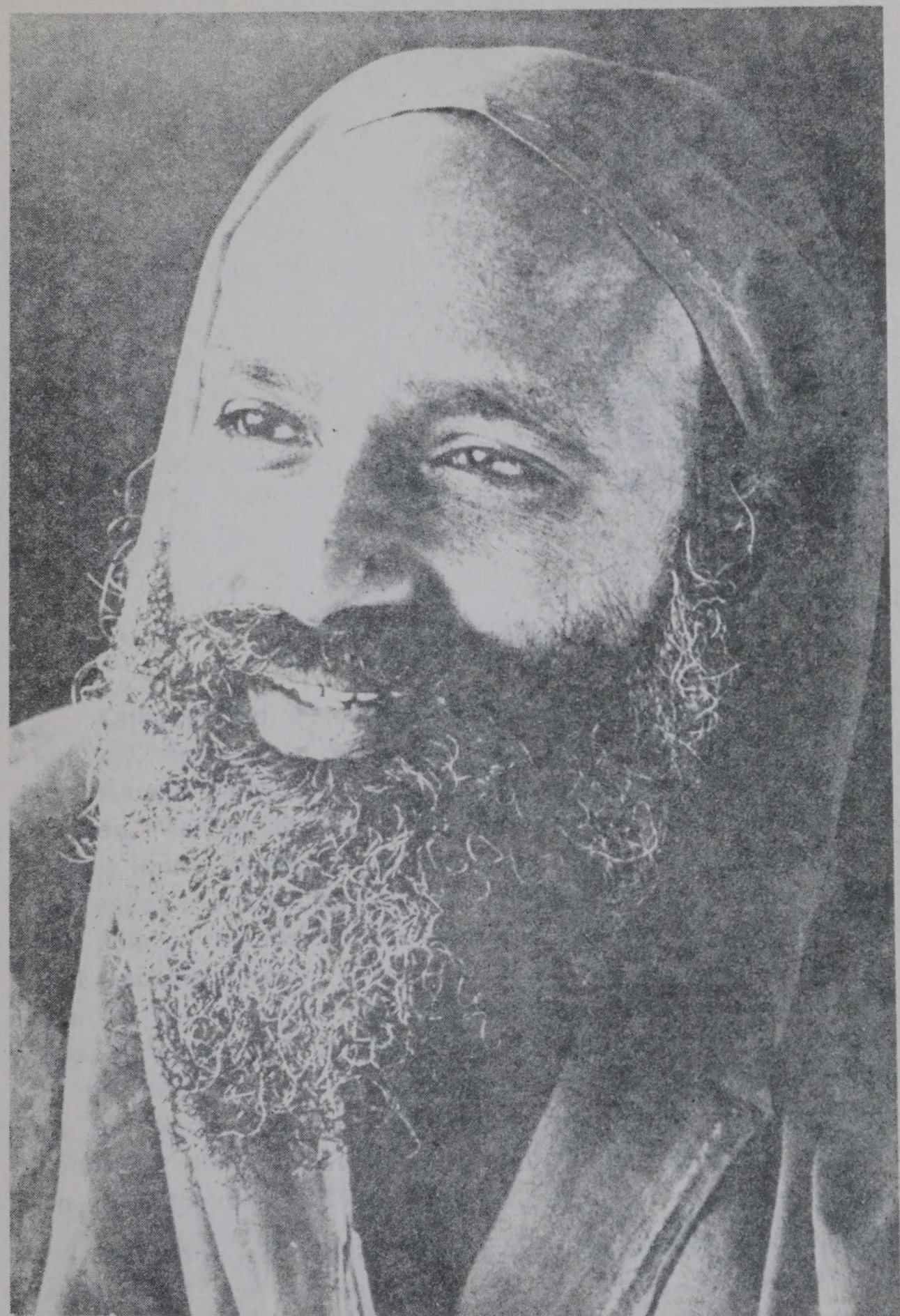
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SWAMI DAYANANDA



FOREWORD

Kāthopaniṣad describes the life of the human being as a journey, the goal of which is to reach the limitless. All the necessary equipment to carry out this journey has been provided to man. Man possesses a chariot in the form of the body, the horses in the form of the sense organs, the reins in the form of the mind and the charioteer in the form of the intellect. With the help of this chariot everyone is constantly travelling in life and reaching different places, attaining different goals. But the journey, the life becomes fulfilled only when one reaches that goal for which the chariot is meant. So what is first needed is the understanding of the goal or the *sādhya*. The *sādhana* or the means becomes meaningful only when one knows the *sādhya* or the end. A discussion on *sādhana* invariably calls for an understanding of the *sādhya*.

Everyone is a seeker, striving to gain fulfilment in life. But majority of the people either do not know or are not clear about what the end is, what it is that they are really seeking. There is a great deal of confusion even in the so called spiritual field where there appears to be a vast choice of "paths"

or "*sādhana*" which the seekers are pursuing without a clear understanding of whether or not they are related to what they are seeking. In view of the confusion prevailing in regard to the *sādhana*, Swamiji gave talks on the *sādhana* in light of what is unfolded by our scriptures, viz., the *upaniṣads*, the Bhagavad Gita, etc. The present book is mainly based on these talks and is the result of a lot of work in the form of transcription, typing, editing, etc., carried out by Swamiji's students.

Swamiji explains how *sādhana* is nothing but the unfolding of what is, since the *sādhya*, the limitless is indeed myself. That I am the end I am seeking, is to be discovered. Certain obstacles, within me, prevent me from knowing and owning up my real Self. *Sādhana* is nothing but the elimination of these obstacles which create a false distance between me, the seeker and me, the sought. This is a unique journey involving no travel.

We are bringing out this book in memory of Sri C. B. Shanmugam, Hyderabad. A dedicated disciple of Pujya Swamiji, Sri Shanmugam had the rare combination of devotion, courage, clarity and pragmatism. He had the wish to bring out this book because he felt this would be useful to the seekers. Fulfilling his wish, the members of Sri C. B. Shanmugam's family offer this book to the seekers the world over.

—Swami Veditatmananda
For Sri Gangadhareswar Trust

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The Seeker and the Sought

The word *sādhana* has several meanings but the most common meaning is, "the means by which something is achieved." So *sādhana* means that by which a desired end is achieved,* because what is sought to be achieved is always desired. The end desired to be achieved is called *sādhya*, and *sādhana*, therefore, naturally brings into light the *sādhya*. The one who is trying to achieve a desired end is called a *sādhaka*. The *sādhya* or the desired end is always kept in view by the *sādhaka* or the seeker who connects himself or herself with the *sādhya* through *sādhana*. When the end is accomplished, the seeker becomes a *siddha* or the accomplished one. When the seeker accomplishes the desired end, he or she is no more a seeker.

Life, a Seeking

Life can be looked upon as a series of *sādhya*s or ends which have already been achieved and which are yet to be achieved. Usually, more than one means are available to achieve any given end. These means may be righteous where the seeker takes into account the moral and ethical codes of conduct. The means may be unrighteous where the seeker may trample upon the rights and requirements of others. As a human being, one is endowed with the faculty of choice and so one can choose the means that one considers the most appropriate. My coming here for the talks is open to my choice. You also have a choice in coming here; you can choose to sleep or do something else instead of coming here. If I want to reach a place, I can walk, go by a car or by a bus. This is the case for every end; I may choose to perform action in one way, I may choose to perform it in a different way or I may choose not to perform it.**

* साध्यते अनेन इति साधनम् ।

** कर्तुं शक्यं, अकर्तुं शक्यं, अन्यथा वा कर्तुं शक्यम् ।

When we analyse the pursuits in our life, we find that the end or the sought is always other than the seeker; what I want to achieve is other than myself. The end may be money, wife, children, name, fame, power, etc., which I do not have at the moment and which is to be gained. When the end is other than myself, that is, separated from me in time, place or objectivity, the end is open to choice as even the means. When the end or goal of life is not understood, the ends keep on varying. For the time being, every small end assumes the proportion of *the* end. But when that end is achieved, it yields its place to another end and so it goes on. The ends become endless and bring an end to the life of this man. At the time of death, man does not have the feeling that he has achieved all he wanted to achieve. Everyone usually has a long list of what is to be accomplished in spite of all one has achieved so far, because the one end in life has not been discovered. I seem to keep on walking into blind alleys without reaching any place and there is really no use in saying, "I have walked long!"

The Sought

What is the real end that I am seeking and that seems to elude me all the time? It must be the end that frees me from all the wants because no want is for the sake of the want. All the wants are for my sake. I only want to get rid of the want. No one is happy with a want. We entertain a desire not to keep it going but to fulfil it. In our discussion of *sādhana* here, it is this end which we shall address ourselves to and not the limited ends such as wealth, fame, etc., which perpetuate the want. We are interested in that end which can be called *the* end. And with regard to this end, a human being has no choice. It is the end that our ancestors were after, it is the end that our contemporaries are pursuing and it is the end that the future generations will also be searching. This is the end that is desired by everyone, at all times, in all places and under all circumstances. Even if a person appears to be pursuing various ends, this is the end that is in the background, this is the end behind all the ends. The means of achieving this end is what we mean by *sādhana* in this discussion.

end of the world
Tyāgī

Life should be meaningful, purposeful. I should see the meaning of life and then the whole life becomes the means to achieve that end. Living becomes purposeful when the end is clear. If I know *the* end, the other ends in life such as a house or an industry, a wife or a husband, can be seen in their proper perspective. They can all become the means to achieve the ultimate end. If the purpose of life is not clear, I find I have not really achieved anything in spite of all that has been achieved.

The *sādhana*, the means becomes meaningful only when I know the *sādhya*, the end. If I want to see a colour, opening the eyes becomes the means. If I want to hear a sound, all I have to do is to apply my ears, put the mind behind the ears. Once the end is clear, the means also becomes clear.

As we said earlier, the real end behind all the ends is to end the want. There are three approaches to end a want or a desire: (1) by acquiring the object of desire, (2) by giving up the desire as undesirable and (3) by growing out of the desire. The one who follows the first mode of getting rid of a desire is called a *saṁsārī*, the one who follows the second one is called a tyāgī and the third one is called a *sannyāsī*.

The one who goes about fulfilling the wants as they arise in the mind, finds that more wants have cropped up even before one want is fulfilled. He always finds himself wanting. No end seems to satisfy him because he finds that an end loses its significance by the time it is achieved. He finds himself dependent upon the objects of desire and more the desires, greater is the degree of dependence. No particular end seems to give him freedom from dependence. Such a person who finds himself or herself as dependent upon the fulfilment of the wants is a *saṁsārī* regardless of whether he or she is married or not.

A *tyāgī* is the one who has given up an object or a desire either because of an ideal or because of a bargain to get something better. But such a one still has a taste for the object. Take the case of a boy playing with marbles. Marbles are most precious for him and he would not settle for anything else,

not even for money. If the father asks the child to stop playing with marbles, he may do so because he has a value for the wish of his father or because he is promised a better thing such as a cricket bat if he stops playing with marbles. In a case such as this, the child gives up the marbles but not the taste or the value for it and so internally, he may wish to play the marbles with other children who may be playing outside. This child is a marble-*tyāgī*. Many of us, who have renounced the pleasures or given up objects may be *tyāgīs* inasmuch as an inner craving for the objects still exists. This is not a mature way of getting rid of desires because the dependence is not totally eradicated.

The same child, when he grows old, has no craving for the marbles. He has grown out of the desire for marbles. He is no more tempted by the marbles even if presented with them. He may play with marbles with his son but he will not feel happier by winning them nor will he feel a loss if marbles are lost by him. He neither has *rāga* (attachment or like) nor *dvesa* (aversion or dislike) for the marbles. He has gained freedom from marbles. He is a *sannyāsī* with respect to marbles ! Bhagavad Gita describes a *sannyāsī* as the one who does not have attachment nor aversion.* A *sannyāsī* is the one who has grown out of wants and who enjoys therefore a real freedom. The *sannyāsī* is not dependent upon any external object or situation for his happiness.

Everyone is a *sannyāsī* with respect to a few things. For example, we are all *sannyāsīs* with respect to garbage, as soon as we consider something as garbage! With respect to a few more things, we are *tyāgīs* inasmuch as we have reluctantly given them up and still entertain a value for them. And there are some other things without which we cannot do; we are dependent upon them and with respect to them, we are *saṁsārīs*.

In our life, the *sādhya* and *sādhanas* keep changing but one thing remains constant; and that is the *sādhaka* or the seeker. Do I always want to remain the seeker? Do I want to

* ज्ञेयः स नित्यसंन्यासी यो न द्वेष्टि न काङ्क्षति । (भ. गी. V-3)

remain dependent upon the objects and situations for my happiness or do I want to be free? Everyone, no doubt, wants to be happy but also everyone wants to be free. There is happiness in freedom and unhappiness in dependence* and therefore everyone wants to be like the *sannyāsī* who is not dependent upon anything for his happiness. No one is happy with dependence. Even in a child, we can see this desire for freedom and independence. Once the child learns to walk, it does not want a paramulator, much less does it want to hold on to the mother. Love for independence makes him even take the risk of falling. The child holds on to the aids only so long as it is necessary. So too with every human being; he wants to be totally free. This total freedom is called *mokṣa* which means liberation or release from dependence. The love for freedom or *mokṣa* is the innate urge in everybody. In everything I want to be independent. I want to be free from the wants, so I should be free to entertain whatever want I want to have! My life should not depend upon the fulfilment of a want. Only when I discover an adequacy, a fullness, a richness that is not other than myself, I feel fulfilled—not just an occasional fulfilment which gets away from me and leaves me high and dry! It should be a freedom that is innate to myself, identical to myself. The *sādhana* must be such as attains the *sādhya*, the *mokṣa* or the lasting fulfilment that every human heart yearns for, works for, struggles for.

The One Means

The question that naturally arises is, "What is the means to this end?" No one will undertake a pursuit unless one knows it will achieve the desired end. The problems in the so called spiritual field are due to the fact that the *sādhya* or the end is not clear and so any odd-looking person is adopted as *guru* and any out-of-the-ordinary method is taken up as *sādhana*.

The nature of the means depends upon the end. Therefore the end must be ascertained before one can decide the proper means. That is why we find that in Bhagavad Gita Lord Kṛṣṇa

* सर्वं परवशं दुःखं सर्वमात्मवशं सुखम् । (म. स्मृ. 4-160)

first unfolds before Arjuna the end rather than the means. The Lord says, "There is no being for a non-existent thing and the existent thing never ceases to exist,"* "Know that to be indestructible."** These statements describe the Reality or the End. Only later on, does the Lord talk about various means such as *karma yoga*, etc..

What everyone wants is absolute freedom, the fullness, the limitlessness. But we find that in all our pursuits of acquiring and enjoying, there is invariably a loss associated with every gain. If I acquire power, I lose the money or resources with which I bought the power. If I acquire a car, I have to give up my savings. If I get married, I lose the freedom of bachelorhood. From the standpoint of what I acquire, there is a gain, but from the standpoint of what I spend for it, there is a loss. This is the nature of every gain; there is no gain which does not involve a loss. Even if it is the gain of heaven which is the field of all enjoyments, there is the loss of *punya* or the meritorious actions which I accumulated in this world. And even while one is in heaven, enjoying heavenly pleasures, the little joys of the earth are not available! One cannot enjoy both this world and heaven at the same time. One of the two must be given up to gain the other. This is the human lot.

In this relative world, every gain is relative or limited in time, place, ability, etc., because it is acquired by an action or a means that is also limited in time, place, etc.. No gain is absolute or limitless. And a series of limited gains cannot add upto the absolute gain which is what everyone desires. There seems to be no way of achieving the absolute gain or the inner freedom by the means of fulfilling the desires.

If a person cannot achieve this absolute gain, this completeness, can he or she give up the seeking? No, because this is a natural urge like hunger, thirst, etc.. A cultivated or an acquired desire can be given up by reasoning with the mind but a natural desire cannot be given up by deliberation or by

* नास्तो विद्यते भावो नाभावो विद्यते सतः । (भ. गी. ॥-१६)

** अविनाशि तु तद्विद्धि । (भ. गी. ॥-१७)

force. The quest to gain completeness or inner freedom is not an acquired want, but a want with which I am born and so I find myself wanting to be complete. There is no deliberation in this want and so it cannot be given up by deliberation. Prompted by this urge, I strive to achieve various ends by various means. But all the efforts are limited and so the achievements are also limited, involving a corresponding loss. By putting forth limited efforts, an incomplete being cannot ever 'become' complete. So an analysis of the various means and ends, known to us only points to the total hopelessness of the situation. When one discovers that hopelessness, one's life gains an edge. One appreciates that in all actions, one seeks only to fulfil that one end.

When a person discovers this hopelessness in life, he or she becomes disenchanted with life. If a proper guidance does not come forth at this time, it is possible that one may lose the enthusiasm of life because there is no purpose in continuing what one has been doing nor does there seem any other direction in which one can direct one's efforts. For want of an alternative, one may plod on, but that only generates frustration.

If you appreciate that there is a problem in life and that the usual means and ends cannot give you what you need in life, you are a mature person. But if this results in a mood of dejection, then you are also susceptible to any *guru*. Just as a physically weak person is susceptible to any virus in the air, you also become susceptible to any odd thing that appears spiritual. At this stage, you want to do something odd because all normal and accepted things have already been tried out. If someone says, "Keep doing whatever you have been doing; just change your attitude. With the attitude of *yoga* keep working; keep running the industry, help people, remain with the family. Thus doing, you will grow and one day you will come to know the Truth," it is not acceptable to you. You want to do something odd, get enlightened by doing something unusual. So if someone tells you, "Do this unusual thing. Something will start rising in your back, will reach your head and you will see light. You will get enlightened, you will be liberated!", you accept it and go after it. You go for it because you do not

know the end, the nature of liberation. Until the end is clear, you will only be groping. At this stage, you have a natural tendency to do odd things, to achieve something that is unknown. You think this fulfilment, the so-called enlightenment, is an event in time—that it will hit you as you do something strange—perhaps under a Bodhi tree!

Let us analyse and see whether this completeness can be gained by doing something. As we have seen before, every gain involves a loss. So by doing something, including odd things—the so-called spiritual *sādhana*—I cannot become complete because *completeness means an absolute gain* involving no loss. I cannot become complete through a process of becoming because any becoming involves change and a change means giving up the previous state and reaching a new state. Thus in a change there is a gain and a loss as well. A series of changes, which involves a series of losses, also cannot make me complete. An incomplete being cannot become complete by a process of change. By a genetic change, perhaps one day, a donkey can be changed into a horse, but incompleteness can never be changed into completeness. By change, I gain new qualities, but in the very process, the old qualities are lost and I remain incomplete.

It has been our experience in life that change does not result into completeness or freedom. A child wants to become an adult so it can be complete, but the adult loses the freedom of the child. A boy wants to become an old man so he can command the respect of all. But after becoming old, he envies the young! Any attempt—physical, emotional or intellectual—is limited and will not make a person complete. At the physical level, for example, by physical exercises, one can trim the body, strengthen the muscles. But this physical change cannot make one complete. Similarly at emotional level, a hateful man can become a loving person by a process of change, but this does not make him complete. It is, no doubt, a welcome change since he is now sensitive to other beings, but this in itself does not make him complete; formerly he was hateful and incomplete and now he is loving and incomplete! So also is the case with an intellectual accomplishment. By getting a

degree or even a doctorate, a woman is not going to be complete. In fact, she will be more keenly aware of the areas in which she is ignorant. Whatever anyone does is limited in terms of time, place and objectivity and is therefore incomplete. Any *sādhana* that achieves a *sādhya* can fall only within the framework of time and space. So no process of change can make a person complete.

Since any kind of change cannot make me complete, *becoming* complete is not possible. There remains only one possibility; maybe I am *already* complete.

Since I love being complete, and since I find myself wanting and striving to be complete, the only possibility that remains is that I must be a complete being already. If I am already a complete being and still want to be complete, it means I do not know myself. From self-ignorance, there is a disowning of the self and thus this predicament.

It is a fact that I am disowning myself and then searching myself. Over the shoulders of every end, I am only seeking completeness that I am. I have concluded that I am incomplete and so any addition to myself or a change in myself leaves me only incomplete. What *sādhana* can remove this assumed incompleteness? The *sādhana* must be such as it removes this self-disowning, the self-ignorance. That *sādhana* or the means can only be self-knowledge because knowledge alone can remove ignorance. Knowing my real nature is the only means of eliminating the self-ignorance and the disowning or the assumed incompleteness arising out of it. Hence the primary means of achieving completeness, freedom, fulfilment, is the knowledge of the Self. As the problem is one of ignorance, knowledge alone can be the solution.

Liberation of Mr. Pot-Space

Once there was a 5-liter pot. The space inside the pot—Mr. 5-Liter-Pot-Space—had the feeling that he was small and limited. He became jealous of a Mr. 50-Liter-Pot-Space, who happened to be next to him. By doing something, he became a 50-Liter-Pot-Space. Still the feeling of limitation continued because now he was jealous of a Mr. 100-Liter-Pot-Space!

Thus in course of time he realized that he really wanted to be limitless. He discovered that regardless of what finite size he becomes, he would remain limited, because infinity cannot be reached by adding finite quantities. He could not get rid of his limitation, nor could he be happy with being limited. So he felt hopeless; he was frustrated.

One day he was introduced by another seeker-pot-space to an odd-looking pot-space who was considered the most wise. In fact he was a *guru*-pot-space. Approaching the *guru* he said, "O Lord! I am limited. I have tried all possible means, gained varied experiences, seen places, but I still am limited. Is there a way to become free from this limitation? Can you teach me a way to cross this sorrow?"

The *guru*-pot-space said, "By a process of change you cannot become limitless. Your problem is to become limitless. You have become a 50-liter-pot-space, but still you are limited. You may become slim or you may expand, but you will remain limited. The limited cannot become limitless. But every natural urge has a means of appeasement. Your quest is natural and therefore, there must be a way out—and there is a way out. Without any change you should discover yourself to be the limitless, complete being. As you have the natural quest you must already be the complete being, and you must be ignorant of it."

Mr. 50-Liter-Pot-Space asked, "If, as you say, I already am limitless, why don't I feel so?"

The *guru* replied, "That is my question! You are the limitless space, and how can you feel limited? This can be only due to ignorance. A 5-liter-pot-space will say, "I am a 5-liter-pot-space." A 500-liter-pot-space will say, "I am a 500-liter-pot-space." What is common in these expressions is 'I am space.' What is uncommon is the number 5 or five hundred or five million. 'Space I am' is common for every pot-space. That 'I am space' is not known as it is. This ignorance alone makes you feel limited. From what stand-point are you saying, 'I am Mr. 50-Liter-Pot-Space'? You look at yourself only from the stand-point of the pot. But from the stand-point of 'I am space,'

how big are you? You, the space, have no form. There is space above; there is space below; there is space around. In fact, in you, the space, all the pots—big or small—have their being. You are the limitless space.”

Mr. 50-Liter-Pot-Space now understood what he really was. He was indeed the space that is limitless. He got liberated.

What change did Mr. Pot-Space undergo to become limitless? How did he become limitless? He discovered the truth about himself. He knew that from the stand-point of the pot, he was 50-liter-space, but from his own stand-point, from the stand-point of the space, he was the limitless space itself. This is called *jñāna* for the pot-space. Primary *sādhana*, the teaching, is called *pramāṇa*, and the teacher is called the *guru*. The teaching helped the pot-space to discover that he is the limitless space. The self-knowledge is the primary *sādhana*.

The Primary and the Secondary Sadhana

Ānanda, the Limitless, is my Nature

“Whatever is dear to me is dear because I love myself*.” This statement of Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad clearly shows that I always love myself and therefore happiness or *ānanda* is my nature—because everyone loves happiness. It also further shows that I love things and beings of the world, not for their sake, but for the sake of the Self. And so happiness or *ānanda* is what I am seeking in and through the pursuits of gaining things and beings in my life.

That happiness is my nature becomes clear when we examine an experience of happiness. What happens when I am happy with an object? What is the frame of my mind when I am in contact with an object I like? I feel at home with the object. At that moment, the mind does not demand anything. Based on my present value structure, I like that object and so the mind feels satisfied at having gained something it likes, something it wants. The mind stops demanding and therefore is quiet, content with itself. I feel happy. I like this state of mind because it reflects my nature that is absolute peace, contentment, freedom from want. Any object that creates such a condition of mind becomes an object of my liking. On the other hand, I dislike that object in the presence of which the mind becomes demanding, projecting, willing or wishing. I am not happy with an agitated or a demanding mind because it does not reflect my true nature. It is not really an object that creates either a like or a dislike; it is my mind, with its present value structure that judges it so. Thus I like myself and therefore also a mind that reflects, as much as possible, my true nature.

* आत्मनस्तु कामाय सर्वं प्रियं भवति । (बृ. उ. IV-5-6)

My true nature is happiness because I like happiness and dislike unhappiness. There is a natural tendency to associate with that which makes me happy and to avoid that which makes me unhappy. If an object lacks something, I try to associate with that object in such a way as to avoid the contact with the lacking aspect. I love to listen to this music but suppose I dislike the musician's gestures, his facial contortions, I would probably close my eyes while listening. I like music but not the musician as he is and so I try to limit my association only to music.

Everyone is happy with what is natural and is unhappy with what is unnatural. I cannot be comfortable with a dust-particle in my eye or a bug in my ear; it is foreign to me, it is an irritant and so I want to get rid of it. Similarly, I find that I am not comfortable with unhappiness because it is an irritant. I want to get rid of unhappiness and so it is unnatural. Fire never wants to get rid of heat because heat is natural to fire. But water wants to get rid of heat because heat is not natural to water and coolness is natural. I never want to get rid of happiness or *ānanda* and so *ānanda* must be natural to me. I always want to get rid of unhappiness and so unhappiness must be unnatural.

Similarly, freedom is my nature because I love freedom and want to get rid of all the shackles. I am limitless because I cannot stand limitations. I am never satisfied with anything small. If the root of all searching and longing is analysed, it becomes quite clear that everyone wants only the big, the limitless – free from the limitations of time, space and objectivity. This is the desire behind all the desires.

Eventhough I am limitless I do not enjoy limitlessness because my nature is covered by ignorance. Ignorance can only be removed by knowledge and so knowledge of the self is the primary *sādhana*.

Pramāṇa, or the Means of Knowledge

To gain any knowledge, we must have *pramāṇa* or a valid and an adequate means of knowledge. The type of knowledge determines the nature of the means of knowledge one should

adopt. For example, for perceiving the colour of an object eyes are the *pramāṇa* and for perceiving the sound ears are the *pramāṇa*.

What I want to know is "I", the Self—not the self I take myself to be—but the limitless, the complete Self. The Self cannot be an object of a means of knowledge because it cannot be objectified. The primary means of knowledge at my disposal, the sense organs, are capable of knowing only the external world. They can give me only perceptual knowledge. The capacity of sensory organs can be improved or enhanced by the use of instruments such as telescope, microscope, etc., which enable us to perceive the objects which cannot be seen by the naked eyes. But the Self is the Subject behind the senses—they cannot objectify the Self.

Other means of knowledge such as inference, presumption, comparison, etc., are also not applicable in case of the Self, because these means are also based on sensory data. For example, we can infer the presence of fire (the cause) when we see smoke (the effect) or infer the presence of a rat (the whole) when we see its tail (a part). Self is not connected with anything in terms of cause and effect or in terms of whole and part and so these indirect means of knowledge also are not applicable in case of the Self.

All the means of knowledge available to me are of no use in knowing the Self. But it has got to be known.* I must know I am full and complete in order to overcome the sense of limitation and inadequacy. So we have to look for an external means of knowledge and this means is Vedanta or *upaniṣads***. Vedanta is in the form of words and it is also called *śabda pramāṇa*, a valid means of knowledge in the form of words. What cannot be perceived by the sense organs or inferred by the mind can be revealed by the words. Hence the Self is called the "Being revealed by the *upaniṣads*." In one of the

* आत्मा वा अरे द्रष्टव्यः । (बृ. उ. IV-5-6)

** वेदान्तो नाम उपनिषत् प्रमाणम् । (वेदान्तसारः 1-3)

upaniṣads we see this question being asked, "I am asking about that Being revealed by the *upaniṣads*.""*

How do the *upaniṣads* reveal the Self to Me? By changing my vision about myself, by removing the notions I entertain about myself. I take myself to be a limited, helpless being, a seeker of freedom. Due to this self-judgement, I disown myself. This judgement keeps me away from being the Self. The *upaniṣads* reveal, "You are not different from what you want to be. You are not limited or inadequate. You are indeed the limitless, the complete being. That Thou Art (*tat twam asi*)."
This removes the notions I have been entertaining about myself, removes ignorance or *āvaraṇa*. Removal of ignorance is the same as knowledge of the Self and so the primary means of Self-knowledge is enquiry (*vicāra*) based on the *upaniṣads*.

The words can reveal the meaning only when the listener sees their meaning as it is meant to be conveyed by the scriptures. And so the words should not be vague or subjective, or else the listener will not have a definite and a clear understanding. Take the word "beautiful" for example. This word will not convey the same meaning to everyone because it has subjectivity; everyone has a personal concept of beauty. Similarly such words as "spiritual," "divine," etc., will produce private concepts. So the words reveal the Self only when the listener understands or sees the meaning of the words and sentences as they are employed in a given context. If subjective words are used, the listener will have only concepts but not the knowledge.

Thus *vicāra* or enquiry based on the *upaniṣads* is the most important factor in the knowledge of the Self. In the *Bṛahadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* sage Yājñavalkya teaches his wife Maitreyī, "The Self, O dear, is to be seen, listened to, reflected upon and meditated upon.""** The Self is to be seen by you, i.e., it should be known as clearly as you see an object. Among

* तं तु औपनिषदं पुरुषं पृच्छामि । (बृ. उ. III-9-26)

** आत्मा वा अरे द्रष्टव्यः श्रोतव्यो मन्तव्यो निदिध्यासितव्यः । (बृ. उ. IV-5-6)

the modes of perception, seeing is the clearest, leaving no vagueness or doubt. So seeing, in this context means knowing clearly without doubt or error. What should I do to see the Self? It should be listened to. This listening is accompanied by enquiry and analysis. Reflection and meditation are aids to listening or *śravaṇa* because by reflection or *manana* the knowledge gained by *śravaṇa* is made free from doubts and is assimilated and by meditation or *nididhyāsana*, it is made free from error, i.e., it is owned up. Hence for carrying out *vicāra* or enquiry, one must listen to the *upaniṣads* from a competent teacher.

The Necessity of the Teacher

The enquiry into the Self must be based on the scriptures and it must be carried out with the help of a competent teacher. The reason is that the Self is indeed the "I" and I already have notions and judgements about the "I". The present notions must be given up and then alone can the real nature of "I" be appreciated. However, if I independently perform this enquiry it is the ego – my present notion about myself which will perform the enquiry and the ego will have a tendency to justify itself, to perpetuate itself. Suppose a rope mistakes itself to be a snake, the snake cannot discover the rope as long as it maintains its identity. Similarly, as long as the ego or *ahaṅkāra* maintains its identity, the Self can never be discovered. And so it becomes necessary to surrender the ego to the one who knows the Self and who also knows how to guide the enquiry so that the ego can discover itself to be the Self. This is how we find that Arjuna surrendered himself, that is, placed himself at the disposal of the teacher, Lord Kṛṣṇa who guided him to the discovery of his real nature.

Listening to the teacher, *śravaṇa* is nothing but performing *vicāra* alongwith the teacher. The *śāstra* or the scriptures reveal myself and what I see in the words is myself. The teacher must employ the words properly and I must understand them in the proper perspective.

Depending upon the dictionary to understand the meaning of the words is likely to misguide us. For example the word

paramahamṣa is found to be translated as "Divine Goose" and the word *hiraṇyagarbha* translated as the "Golden Egg." The intended meanings may have no relation with the meanings found in the dictionary because the words must be interpreted in their proper context. The word *parama* means limitless and the word *hamṣa** means that which destroys ignorance. So the word *paramahamṣa* means the knowledge of the limitless (Brahman) that destroys the ignorance and it is generally applied to denote a *sannyāsī* who is supposed to have destroyed his ignorance. The word *hiraṇya* means that which is effulgent and is used in the sense of knowledge. The word *garbha* means the content. Hence the word *hiraṇyagarbha* should be understood as the Lord in the form of the knowledge. A statement in the Taittiriya Upaniṣad goes like this, "In the beginning there was *asat*."** The word *asat* is generally interpreted as non-existence, but here it is to be understood as the unmanifest. Hence the statement means, "In the beginning (before the creation) the world was unmanifest." So the words must be properly unfolded by the teacher, or else they can lead to a lot of misunderstanding.

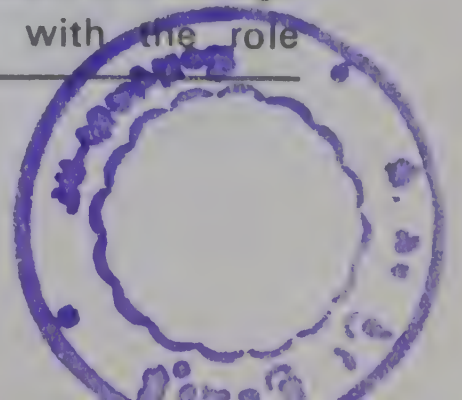
If we study the commentaries on the *upaniṣads* by various authors we find that the commentaries contain discussion on points not directly referred to by the texts. The purport of the statements of the *upaniṣads* has to be unfolded by adopting a certain methodology (*sampradāya*) which is handed down by the teacher to the disciple. The teacher, who got it from his teacher knows how to unlock the sentences and unfold meaning. A commonly held belief is that the teaching provides only theoretical knowledge about the Self and the student must do something practical to experience it! Such beliefs are retained only when the teaching is not proper, i.e., when the meaning of the words is not properly unfolded.

Words as a Means of Direct Knowledge

The common belief that words can give only indirect knowledge of the Self arises from our normal experience with the role

* अज्ञानं हन्ति इति हंसः ।

** असद्वा इदमग्र आसीत् । (तै. उ. ॥-७-१)



of words. Take the case of the knowledge gained by an American when he hears about a *laḍḍu*. He learns that it is a sweetmeat of the size of a ping-pong ball, yellow in colour and granular to touch. From this description, he knows that a *laḍḍu* is not like a foot-ball or a chocolate candy. But sweetness varies from one preparation to another and so he imagines the sweetness of *laḍḍu*. He only has an indirect knowledge of the taste of *laḍḍu*. It is not a settled knowledge and is subject to change with time, as his imagination changes. Although the one who described the *laḍḍu* to the American has no doubt about it, the listener has only an imagination about it because he has not seen the *laḍḍu* nor has he tasted it. To gain the direct knowledge of the *laḍḍu*, he may have to come to India and use the valid means of knowledge which is the taste in this case. The indirect knowledge of *laḍḍu*, gained through words is converted to the direct knowledge by taste. And so the conclusion is that words always give us an indirect knowledge and perception gives us the direct knowledge.

When this conclusion is extended to the knowledge of *ātmā*, the Self which is described as full, eternal, complete, it would be thought that these words give only indirect knowledge and some other means must be employed to convert it into direct knowledge, just as the indirect knowledge of *laḍḍu* gained through its description, was converted into direct knowledge by the perception of taste. This is all right for the *laḍḍu* (or for any other object) because *laḍḍu* was away from the person when it was described through words and so its direct knowledge was not possible. But this is not the case with *ātmā*. If some other *pramāṇa* could reveal *ātmā*, then words would not be called *pramāṇa* anyway. The truth is that the *ātmā* that scriptures reveal through words is not away from me. It is myself and so it is directly, immediately known to me. When I unfold your own personality, you can see it without any other *pramāṇa* such as eyes, etc.. Similarly, *ātmā* is already accomplished and so words give direct knowledge, *aparokṣa jñānam*. *Ātmā*, I, is not away from me as a *laḍḍu* is. How can I ever be away from myself?

Then how does the knowledge not take place in spite of listening about the Self so often? Words do not seem to create the direct knowledge which they are supposed to create! It appears as though I have understood all that the words have to say and so now I need something which will make me own up the *ātmā* that is understood. But is this right? Words must directly reveal what I am, without the need for any other means of knowledge. If words cannot reveal this knowledge directly, there remains no other means to know myself. All other means are for knowing a thing other than myself. If the eyes are colour-blind and I cannot perceive colours by eyes, it does not mean I can use ears to see colours! There is no alternative or choice in knowing colours other than the eyes. We have to use a particular means meant for the knowledge of a given object. Eyes are the only valid means for the knowledge of the colour and if we cannot see colours properly, we must do something to correct the eyes rather than trying to gain that knowledge through ears or through some other organ of perception.

Similarly, words of the scriptures are the means of knowledge to make me know what I am. They must give me direct knowledge because the subject of knowledge, I, is already accomplished, like the tenth man.* By words alone, the missing tenth

*The "tenth-man" story :

Once ten boys went for a picnic. They swam across a river which happened to be on their way. After reaching the opposite bank, their leader thought of verifying if all of them had reached safely. He asked the other boys to line up so he could count them. Upon counting, he found only nine boys! When several counts revealed the same result, the boys concluded that the tenth boy was lost. They started searching him all over. In spite of searching for the whole day in all conceivable places, they could not find the missing boy so they sat under a tree, lamenting the loss of their companion. An old man who happened to pass by found the boys weeping. When told what had happened, the old man immediately spotted the problem and consoled, "Fear not, the tenth man is." He asked the leader to count the boys again and when the count reached nine, he declared, "You are the tenth man." The tenth was already the boy but he forgot to count himself.

man was discovered to be the self because he was already accomplished. If I don't get direct and immediate knowledge from the words, I must look at them again, like checking the eyes if they do not produce the knowledge of the colour. So *vicāra* must be performed again and again to see the meaning of the *śāstra* because words are only a medium to communicate the Self and enquiry must be conducted until we see the meaning. Direct Knowledge has not taken place if I think I have understood but I don't 'feel' I am the complete and limitless being: enquiry has not been sufficient. You are to know—not to feel. The Brahma Sūtras say that the enquiry must be conducted repeatedly (for direct knowledge to take place).** It is also said, "May he do *śravaṇa*, listening, again and again."*** Keep on enquiring again and again until you see it. There is no alternative in gaining the knowledge of colour except that we try to see again and again with our eyes.

Secondary Obstacles

We understand very well when the *śāstra* talks about sorrow, dream, body, sense organs, sensory experiences, etc.. This is so because *śāstra* is not the *pramāṇa* for them; they are known by us directly. But when *śāstra* talks about *sat*, *cit*, *ānanda*, for which it is *pramāṇa*, it is all Latin and Greek! Because it is unfamiliar to us. Eternity and fullness are not familiar to us. I don't seem to get the hang of the words, let alone gain the vision conveyed by the *śāstra*. In fact the *upaniṣads* or the *śabda pramāṇa* only deal with "I" the subject and they have no other purpose. So I should be able to see myself in the mirror of the words of *upaniṣads*. If I am not able to see the meaning, myself, in these words, there must be something wrong with my mind where the meanings are to be seen. Unless I see the meaning of the sentence as myself, it is a meaningless sentence. It does not become meaningful in spite of repeating it several times. That means that the intellectual

** आवृत्तिः असकृत् उपदेशात् । (ब्र. सू. IV-1-1)

*** पौनः पुन्येन श्रवणं कुर्यात् ।

discipline or the preparedness is lacking. Because of my educational background, I see the reasoning, but the knowledge in my mind is different.

Take the case of consoling a man who has lost a near and a dear person. In that sorrowful state, if we tell him, "You are *ānanda*," he cannot appreciate it—in fact it upsets him. Even if he sees the reasoning of how he can be nothing but *ānanda*, the sorrow remains. The words do not create any impact. Similarly, the words of the *śāstra* do not create an impression on my mind because it is not ready to see the meaning.

Ignorance or *āvaraṇa* is the main obstacle to the knowledge of the Self and the words are meant to remove this. But when words are not able to create knowledge, it shows there are some other obstacles. These secondary obstacles are two-fold: *mala* (impurity) and *vikṣepa* (the distraction of the mind). The impurity is in the form of likes and dislikes which are common to every person. Likes and dislikes colour and distort the meaning of the words. When there is poison in the mouth, the food gets poisoned. Similarly, the words which get filtered through the mind riddled with likes and dislikes get distorted in spite of the thoroughness and eloquence of the teacher. The student comes out unscathed in spite of listening for a long time! Neither the disciple nor the teacher is to be blamed. The situation only reveals that there are obstacles. The disciple may have to do something here. I must open my eyes if I want to see colour; neither the flower nor the eyes can be blamed if the eyes are not open. But if the eyes cannot see in spite of their being open, the blame is with the instrument, the eyes.

The obstacles of *mala* and *vikṣepa* must be largely eliminated and the mind should be rendered relatively free of them before one can understand the meaning of the scriptures, the nature of the Self and own up the Self that is *ānanda*—free and limitless. The Vedas reveal two means to eliminate the two obstacles. *Karma* (action) performed with the attitude of worship is enjoined for the elimination of *mala*. *Upāsanā* (mental worship

or meditation) is enjoined for the elimination of *vikṣepa*. Karma Kāṇḍa of the Vedas, which constitutes the bulk of the Vedas deals with *karma*, as well as *upāsanā*. The end portion of the Vedas, called Vedānta, has its subject matter in *jñāna*, Knowledge to eliminate the main obstacle of ignorance, *āvaraṇa*. Through *karma* with proper attitude, one gets free from *mala* and by *upāsanā*, from *vikṣepa*. When these two have gone to a great extent, one is free from any obstacle in understanding the teaching, the *pramāṇa*.

Mala, the Impurity of the Mind

The Source of Likes and Dislikes

No one is free from likes and dislikes. One picks up likes and dislikes as one goes along in the life. The parents create a value-structure that creates likes and dislikes in the child. My mother loved the colour blue and so I also love it. My mother hated the colour red and so I also came to dislike it. The children have to be told what is right and what is wrong until they come to discover it by themselves; there is no other way of bringing up the children. Also the child picks up likes and dislikes from teachers, friends and others around him, as well as from books, movies, marketing propaganda, etc.. The society and also the culture impose codes of conduct, do's and don't's, upon the individual. Everyone is nothing but a collection of likes and dislikes. Everyone has a value-structure with respect to which he or she views the world.

The world is looked upon in three different ways by every person; there are objects which one likes; there are others, which one dislikes and there are yet others about which one is neutral. An object of like is that in the presence, possession or appearance of which one is happy and the absence or loss of which makes one unhappy. An object of dislike is that in the absence of which one is happy and the presence of which makes one unhappy. Neutral objects are those about which one is indifferent, that is, the presence or absence of which do not cause either happiness or unhappiness.

Thus depending upon one's value-structure built up over years, one views an object as an object of like, dislike or indifference. The objects are not created by me—they are there to fulfil some purpose. They do not have as their attributes likes and dislikes. Any given object liked by one may be disliked by another and it may not be able to evoke anything more than indifference in another person. While one is happy

in acquiring an object, another one is equally happy in getting rid of it! This shows that likes and dislikes are both private, subjective concepts of an individual and so we essentially live, not in a world as it is but rather in our own private world of likes and dislikes. Upon the sight of an object, the mind immediately superimposes like or dislike upon it and so a distorted vision of the object is presented to the intellect for judgement and response. The public world is not what I live in but I rather live in a private world fashioned by my likes and dislikes. So what makes me unhappy - the public world or my own world? I can't say that the world as it is makes me happy, for I have no knowledge of it with all my likes and dislikes.

Likes and Dislikes create problems

A person is dependent upon likes and dislikes for his happiness and peace of mind. When the presence of an object makes me unhappy, there arises an urge to avoid it or to get rid of it. When the presence of an object makes me happy, I desire to possess it and there is a struggle to acquire it. The struggle to acquire what I like, to avoid what I dislike is constant. If my contact with the world is unavoidable, this struggle is also unavoidable. It is like driving a vehicle on the road when one must be alert to avoid accidents because there is always a possibility of meeting with one. One cannot drive in a garage for the fear of accidents. One may avoid accidents but one reaches nowhere.

If likes and dislikes are definite in number, I can plan to fulfil them one by one. But the nature of likes and dislikes is this that they create new ones even as we go on fulfilling them. Old ones go for the new ones to take their place. Likes and dislikes cannot be exhausted by fulfilling them.

The values of a person also keep on changing because they are subjective. What is liked today may not be liked tomorrow and what is liked in one place may not be liked in another. A cup of coffee which may be very desirable in the morning may not be desirable in the middle of the night. What is desirable when I am hungry may not be desirable when

I do not have appetite. The company of my wife may be desirable in the home but not in the office. The furniture which is liked when new, becomes an object of indifference after five years and may even become an object of dislike later on. That is why we have garage sales where so many house-hold articles are willingly disposed of at bargain prices. Thus the value-structure varies with time, place and conditions and as a result, the likes and dislikes also keep on varying. This makes the problem of fulfilling likes and dislikes even more difficult. Man seems to be helpless and totally dependent upon the fulfilment of likes and dislikes with the result that he is generally sorrowful, for, the likes and dislikes cannot be totally fulfilled.

For a sensitive mind, there is sorrow even with regard to small things. The mother desires that the son should get up early in the morning to do his lessons. In spite of telling him, the son does not get up early. Mother finds him sleeping and she gets up with a sorrow in the morning and starts complaining about the son. If such is the case for a simple thing as this, what to talk of those big things that one wants in life?

We cannot even accept things over which we have no control. I don't want to grow old. I don't like the wrinkles on my face. I sometimes do not even like things such as my eye-brows and my nose, with which I am stuck! Some people do not like the lines on their palms because they are not good according to palmistry! Someone is not happy with the physical body—with the height, weight, etc.. So every time he looks at himself in the mirror, he is unhappy ! Even religion can contribute to likes and dislikes. To a so-called spiritual person, a materialistic person becomes an object of dislike. To him everything associated with spiritual pursuit, the Vedanta, the Swami, the teaching, can all become objects of like. The teaching of scriptures is also filtered through the likes and dislikes and that creates new likes and dislikes for people who follow or who do not follow the spiritual pursuit. Even God is not free from our likes and dislikes; I like one deity and not another. If I cannot accept what I have, about which I cannot do anything, who can predict I am going to make my life happy? No one can fulfil all likes and dislikes when one

is manipulating with limited resources. Even driving on roads becomes nerve-racking. It is quite natural if man is frustrated in life and if he is not, it is only because the human heart always has a hope for the future.

Likes and Dislikes deny the Self

Likes and dislikes keep me a seeker of happiness and thus deny the happiness that is my real nature. Likes and dislikes keep me away from me, the *ānanda*. They make me a seeker of *ānanda*. I cannot be sorrowful because I am the witness of sorrow which comes and goes, although it is the *ānanda* that appears to be coming and going! But if *ānanda* were an intruder, I would be unhappy when *ānanda* comes. But that is not so. I am unhappy with sorrow and so it must be an intruder, like a bug in my ear. No one can be happy with a foreign thing in oneself. It is an irritant that I cannot stand, that I must get rid of. So sorrow is alien; it is not my nature. I am happy with happiness, so it is my nature. One who knows oneself as *ananda* is happy for no reason, just as fire is hot for no reason because heat is the nature of fire. Lord Kṛṣṇa describes a wise man as the one who is happy by himself because of himself.*

An ignorant person whose mind is riddled with countless likes and dislikes is dependent upon countless things for happiness. Such a person requires a reason to be happy and happiness seems to depend upon a factor other than himself or herself. So likes and dislikes keep one away from enjoying the happiness that one is and make one seek happiness in the objects where it is essentially not.

One has to discover a value for a mind free from likes and dislikes. One has to see this fact that a sorrowful mind has likes and dislikes. But these are like the snake whose fangs are removed. They make him human without having any hold on him. So all that is required is to incapacitate the likes and dislikes to cause any disturbance in my mind. Such a poise of mind is called *yoga* in the Gita.

* आत्मन्येवात्मना तुष्टः । (भ. गी. ॥-५५)

Our experience is that we get upset with a situation when our likes and dislikes are pronounced. If I have a pronounced or a strong attitude about salt in the meal, every meal can become a problem; I could get upset if the salt is more or less than my liking. I would be furious if there is no salt at all! At the same time, we also know of things we like but which we do not bother about, if they are not fulfilled. I prefer a red shirt but I do not mind if it is white. I prefer to have coffee but I do not mind if tea is offered. In such cases, the likes and dislikes have no sting and we are able to take things without being upset about them. Then I am with myself because the mind does not project. The mind is quiet. *Samatvam*, equipoise, equanimity, to be with myself, is called *yoga*.^{*} To take the desirable or the undesirable things as they come, with a poise, is *samatvam* and that alone is called *yoga*. But that will not happen as long as I have pronounced *rāgas* and *dveṣas*. Equipoise does not come just like that. I lose the poise of my mind when something happens that is unacceptable to me. So a value must be discovered for *samatvam*; it must be understood that it helps me remain with myself. A mind in equipoise is able to appreciate the world as it is. Such an appreciation always brings joy. When we appreciate the sky, the sun, the stars, there is an objective appreciation because the mind does not project likes and dislikes upon them. We do not want them to be different from what they are and so the appreciation of nature brings joy. A mind free from pronounced likes and dislikes can appreciate the entire creation in an objective manner and no object can disturb the poise of the mind. So a mind in poise is a happy mind that can discover and appreciate the absolute peace and happiness, that is the nature of the Self.

A seeker has to discover the value for a mind in equipoise and pursue the means to attain it. When the value is recognised, one would attempt to acquire it by neutralising the likes and dislikes. The means of attaining such a mind is *karma yoga* outlined in the Bhagavad Gita which has its source in the Vedas.

^{*} समत्वं योग उच्यते । (भ. गी. ॥-४७)

Karma Yoga

Mala or *rāga* and *dveṣa* (likes and dislikes) are many and varied and merely by fulfilling them, it is impossible to achieve freedom. In fact, they deny the freedom that I already am. Since they stem from Self-ignorance, it is the Self-knowledge that can free one from *rāgas* and *dveṣas*. They are sustained because I feel empty within myself. If I know I am full, the likes and dislikes remain not the binding factors but rather the human emotions, because there is no question of being happier when I am already full and complete. The binding likes and dislikes disappear in the wake of the knowledge of the Self. But knowledge can take place only in a mind that is essentially free from likes and dislikes because when they are present and I am told I am full and complete, I cannot understand that. An extrovert mind is the one that depends upon a number of external factors for its fulfilment, always looks for things outside in order to be happy. A mind that looks inside for happiness may be called introvert. But we want neither of them; we want a free mind. Unless I know the Self that is full and complete the likes and dislikes will not go. So likes and dislikes cannot be eliminated unless knowledge takes place and knowledge cannot take place unless likes and dislikes are neutralised. Each one depends upon the other. Like a girl who wants to learn swimming. She cannot plunge into the water unless she knows swimming and she cannot learn swimming unless she plunges into the water. There must be a way to overcome this situation.

Likes and dislikes cannot be eliminated but they can be neutralised. Then the mind becomes relatively free from them. Lord Kṛṣṇa says in Bhagavad Gita that he is a *yogī* who is able to keep under check the impulses of passion and anger (which stand for *rāga* and *dveṣa*).* For such a person, the

* शक्नोतीहैव यः सोढुं प्राक्शरीरविमोक्षणात् ।

कामक्रोधोद्वेगं वेगं स युक्तः स सुखी नरः ॥ (भ. गी. V-23)

rāga and *dveṣa* cannot obstruct the taking place of knowledge. The means suggested for this is *karma yoga* which is an attitude or an outlook towards actions and their results. The attitude of *yoga* with respect to action is called *īśvarārpaṇa buddhi* or performing the action as an offering to the Lord. The attitude with respect to the result of the action is called *prasāda buddhi* or a glad acceptance of the results as they come. These attitudes can be discovered by an understanding of the scheme of life and the law governing the action.

Action as Worship to Lord : Duty

Since I am already complete, limitless, the life should be one of unfoldment rather than that of achievement. What I do is not important because achievement is not important for me—I already am what I want to achieve. It is this want or the sense of insufficiency, born of Self-ignorance, that I have to get rid of and so action should become a means of making me free from the sense of achievement. What I achieve from an action is not important but the attitude with which I perform the action is important. This attitude is described in the Bhagavad Gita by Lord Kṛṣṇa, "The one from whom is the creation of all the beings and by whom is all this (world) pervaded; worshipping Him (the Lord) with one's own duty, man attains perfection (purification of the mind)."

The Lord is the creator of the universe and He maintains it too. We see that everything goes on smoothly and efficiently. A great *yajña*, a great sacrifice is going on. The Lord has created the world and He is ceaselessly at work to maintain it. Lord *Viṣṇu* is the sustainer of the creation and He is depicted as lying on the serpent-bed as though in sleep. But this is not because He does not do anything; on the contrary it shows how effortlessly, spontaneously He maintains the whole creation. The creation is originated from Him and He pervades it, He sustains it.

* यतः प्रवृत्तिर्भूतानां येन सर्वमिदं ततम् ।

स्वकर्मणा तमभ्यर्च्य सिद्धिं विन्दति मानवः ॥ (भ. गी. XVIII-46)

We are not separate from the creation. Each one is a part of the creation, a small link in the chain of creation in which everything is interrelated. And so we have a role to play like even a small gland in the body-politic has a role to play. A small gland does a small job but it does contribute to the smooth functioning of the whole body. If the gland does not do its job properly, the whole system gets disturbed. We are also a part of the creation and so we also have to play our part. We are not meant to be merely the witnesses in the creation; we are meant to be participants. If human being were meant to be a witness in the creation, he would have been provided only with the faculties of perception, viz., seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling and touching. It would be just one head watching another head and the world! The participation in the creation would only be to the extent of seeing, tasting, smelling, etc.. But we are given hands and legs, from which it is very clear that we are expected to act.

Every member of the creation acts, participates. Even a tree does what it should do; a mango tree produces mangoes and a lemon tree produces lemons. The cows and even the mosquitoes provide their share of participation; they also behave exactly as they should. They all perform their functions as programmed. So man also must participate, play his role.

Man is a Self-conscious being, gifted with the faculty of choice. Human mind is not preprogrammed like that of animals and plants and so man has to make a choice in every situation. He has the freedom to do something one way, or to do it differently or not to do it altogether and so he has to learn what is proper for him under a given situation and do accordingly. This is called duty.

When we live in the society, in the world, there are certain requirements. Everyone is called upon to perform certain actions as obligatory duties on account of one's place in the family, society, nation, etc.. No one is an isolated or an independent entity. One owes to the rest of the world for what one is. The parents have given birth to my body and have nurtured and nourished it. The parents, teachers and many others have con-

tributed to the wealth of knowledge and other skills I have acquired. Even the plants and animals and insects contribute to my existence. The cosmic forces are also at work to provide me with air, water, light and countless other things needed to sustain my life and carry out the various functions in life. Naturally, therefore I am obliged to all these factors in my life and my actions must reflect this understanding. Such a response is called duty. Everyone possesses this sense of duty in keeping with the culture, the up-bringing, the family tradition and the code of conduct prevalent in the society. It is the duty of the parents to bring up children. It is the duty of an employee to fulfil obligations to the employer. It is the duty of the citizen to abide by the laws of nation. Due to culture or tradition, we may also feel duty-bound to our neighbour, to fellow-beings, to guests, to old people and even to animals and plants.

The sense of duty is a value which grows upon one and which cannot be avoided. I bring up my child for the sake of bringing up and not for my sake because the human child requires care, love, guidance, help. I do it because I am the author of my child; otherwise I have no right to bring forth a child. This is the attitude of duty. On the other hand if I bring up my son because he will look after me in my old age, there could be a problem. Then the attitude of the son can affect me. I am worried if he is indifferent to me. My mind cannot be free from anxiety. My function is to make my son understand his duty and I myself set an example for him by my attitude towards my parents. There is no demand from the son in return of my bringing him up. I do it happily because it must be done. Since accomplishment is not important—doing is important—there is no expectation of any benefit from the action. I find myself in a situation; there must be a meaning in it and so the task must be done. And it is done. This is called *arcanā* or worship to the Lord. Action performed with a sense of duty, arising out of the appreciation of the situation, becomes *arcanā*.

I perform an action as an expression of gratitude for all I have gained and then every action becomes an offering to the Lord. Work is performed for the joy of work and not

because something is to be gained from it. I am not in the hands of the fancies or likes and dislikes. I see a situation and do what is to be done. There may be something I like to do in a given situation but I refrain from doing it if it is not proper in that situation. I give up my like and do what I do not like—this is duty. Duty is that which must be done whether or not it is in agreement with my likes and dislikes. If the like and the duty coincide, the action becomes spontaneous. If the like does not coincide with the duty the action becomes deliberate—this is *karma yoga* with respect to action. If I do what I fancy, regardless of whether it is proper or not, it is an impulsive action. An impulsive person is in the hands of likes and dislikes and therefore full of conflicts. A deliberate person, who does what should be done, releases the mind from likes and dislikes in course of time. The sense of duty grows upon the person such that the duties are performed as naturally as breathing and eating. The mind of such a person is a fit instrument to appreciate the teaching.

Desire-Prompted Actions

Likes and dislikes remain in the mind until one discovers adequacy. Likes and dislikes create desires. When I feel happy in the presence of an object, it is natural that a desire to acquire the object will arise. When I am unhappy in the presence of an object, a desire to avoid it will also arise. As long as there are likes and dislikes in the mind, desires are inevitable and desires will prompt actions to fulfil them. If likes and dislikes are not very pronounced, desires arising from them can be given up by reasoning or by will. But this is not possible when likes and dislikes are pronounced. In that case, desires are also pronounced and they cannot be dismissed by will. Dismissal of pronounced desires will amount to suppression and some day it will blast the individual. So existence of *kāmya karma* or desire-prompted actions has to be accepted. Actions prompted by the desire for security, pleasure, power, etc., are *kāmya karmas*. Such actions are performed for my sake rather than for the sake of actions and therefore they cannot be classified as duties.

Desire-prompted actions are likely to generate more likes and dislikes. No one performs an action without some end in view and so a desire prompted action is performed with a view to gain a specific result. If the result of the action is in conformity with the expectation, the performer considers himself or herself as successful and feels happy. If the result is not in conformity or if it is below expectations, one gets the feeling of failure and feels dejected. Feelings of success and failure are a natural consequence of desire-prompted actions.

Success brings about a like and happiness and therefore a desire to acquire more success. Failure brings about a dislike and dejection and therefore a desire to avoid the action. So no matter how an action is performed and whatever the result is, likes and dislikes are the consequence and so more desire-prompted actions follow bringing about further likes and dislikes and further actions. Thus desire-prompted actions perpetuate the chain of likes and dislikes and one is always under their hold.

Likes and dislikes cannot be avoided by giving up the actions because giving up of actions is not within the choice of an ignorant man. One cannot remain even for a moment without action.* As long as likes and dislikes remain, desires continue to arise and as long as desires arise, actions are inevitable because otherwise the desires have to be suppressed. Actions cannot be given up until likes and dislikes are neutralised.

The Law of Action

How to perform desire-prompted actions without creating new likes and dislikes? By remaining free from the judgement of success and failure. Because when a result is branded as success, there arises *rāga* or like and when branded as failure, there arises *dveṣa* or dislike. If the result is taken neither as success nor as failure, no new *rāga* and *dveṣa* can arise on account of the result of the action. To stay away from branding the result as success or failure, one requires an understanding of the relationship between an action and its result and Lord Kṛṣṇa explains this in the Bhagavad Gita.

* न हि कश्चित्क्षणमपि जातु तिष्ठत्यकर्मकृत् । (भ. गी. III-6)

Lord Kṛṣṇa states the general rule about the nature of action and its result in this famous verse: "You have the choice in performing an action but never in determining the result thereof."* Human being is blessed with the faculty of choice, which no other living being seems to enjoy. With discriminative intellect, you can choose, plan and perform an action with a view to obtaining a desired result, but you have no choice in determining the result of the action. The result of the action is not in your hand because then you would never fail; you would achieve everything. If one were given the freedom to determine the result by one's will, there would have been no order in the universe because people entertain contradictory desires and if they have to be simultaneously fulfilled, everything would have to stop or come to an end. But the fact is that the result is governed by the law of action, the law of cause and effect. The law of action is not within our control. We can estimate the result based on our present understanding but it is, at best, a guess. Innumerable factors go into determining the result and we do not have the knowledge of all of them. We know a few of the laws and based on that knowledge, we can judge the outcome of an action with a certain probability but there cannot be certainty. It is like shooting an arrow. The archer can aim the arrow at the desired target and release it with the required force. The archer can release the arrow at the target based on the judgement but he or she cannot be certain whether the arrow will definitely hit the target. Once the arrow is released from the bow, its flight is governed by the laws of nature. Factors such as wind, velocity, etc., also influence the result. The archer can estimate these factors but cannot control them.

Lord Kṛṣṇa seems to say, "Be ready for a failure, because the result is not in your control." When two palms are simply joined together, it becomes a salute. If the palms are brought together with a force, there is a clap and a sound is produced. I have no control over the fact of their producing a sound. In spite of my will, I cannot avoid the sound. The result is not

* कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन । (भ. गी. ॥-४७)

in my domain of choice. It is on account of the law which I have not created. We are bound by the laws. They have been there before we were born. The result must accrue according to the laws that govern the production of sound from an impact. So the Lord says, "You are the doer of the action. You have a faculty of choice and so you can choose the action. Animals do not have this faculty of choice and so you are blessed. You have the freedom or *adhikāra* in performing the *karma*. But you have no control over the result." If I clap and pray for silence at the same time, the Lord can only laugh at me. I cannot question as to why the Lord is making noise; it is I who is making noise. My expectation of silence is wrong. Laws do not commit any mistake; the Lord does not make any mistake. For example, the law of gravity works equally all the time at all the places; then alone is science possible. Then alone can we relate ourselves with the world. Action can never fail us; it only produces result. A given expectation may be said to have failed but I have not failed. That I have failed or the action has failed, is a wrong conclusion; only the expectation has been wrong. So nobody has failed. It is only a matter of wrong judgement because man is not omniscient, and so he cannot know all the factors that shape the actions. No one can precisely predict the result. Everyone can make an error of judgement and so one day or the other, everyone is likely to commit a mistake. But we should understand that we have the freedom or *adhikāra* in *karma* alone and that whatever result comes, is in accordance with the laws governing the action. And I did not produce the laws nor did my forefathers. We call Him *Īśvara* or the Lord who is the author of the creation and its laws.

So there is no such thing as success or failure; there is merely the action and its result. If I clap and brand myself a failure because I did not expect the sound to be produced, I alone am to blame. If, on the other hand, I brand myself as successful because the sound is produced, I am equally wrong. I have the freedom of choice in performing actions while it is the laws, created by the Lord, that produce the results.

Lord Kṛṣṇa is only asking us to bear in mind this fundamental law of action and not brand that result as a success or as a failure. This attitude, of taking the result as it is, that is, maintaining an equanimity of the mind both in success and failure, is called *yoga*.*

The Prasāda Buddhi

The Lord is the author of the creation and therefore the author of the laws governing the creation. So when the laws are said to have produced the result, it is the Lord who has actually produced it. So every result comes from the Lord. For a devotee, the entire life is based on this fact. I have choice only in performing the action but the result is according to the desire of the Lord. The Lord is impartial and so only the right result comes to me. This understanding or the culture brings about an attitude towards the result. The result becomes *prasāda*.

It is a common custom with the Hindus to first offer the food to the Lord. This is called *naivedya*. When it is received back from the Lord, it becomes *prasāda* because it carries with it, the grace of the Lord. *Prasāda* is commonly distributed in the temples. The important thing about *prasāda* is that it comes from the Lord and it carries His grace and therefore it will bless whoever partakes of it with reverence and gratitude.

Anything coming from the Lord is *prasāda*. It may be a *tulasī*-leaf, a sugar crystal or *vibhūti* (ashes); it is all accepted with the same attitude. A devotee does not look upon an object as an object although he or she perceives it as an object. The *look* is that of an object but the *outlook* is that of *prasāda*. The nature, the quality or the quantity of the object is of no consequence. Everyone of them is a *prasāda*. The Lord says, "Extend this attitude to your day to day life, that every result comes from Me alone." I have no choice over the result of the action and so there is no failure even if the result is not as I expected. Success is also a *prasāda* and I don't jump to the ceiling. Failure is also a *prasāda* and so I don't

* समत्वं योग उच्यते । (भ. गी. ॥-४७)

sink to the bottom. The *phala* or the result is sanctified because it comes from the Lord and so there is a happy acceptance of every result.

There is no sense of success or failure but rather there is a sense of gratitude with every result. The attitude of accepting the result as *prasāda* leads to the elimination of all sorrow.*

Action can produce likes and dislikes only if the result is looked upon as a success or a failure. When the result is looked upon as a function of the invariable laws of action, or if it is looked upon as *prasāda* from the Lord, the reaction of success and failure is avoided. The mind is calm and tranquil in spite of apparent successes and failures and no new likes and dislikes are created. The existing likes and dislikes will no doubt create desires and produce actions but creation of new likes and dislikes is avoided. The vicious chain of action-success/failure-likes/dislikes-desire-action is broken. With the attitude of *prasāda buddhi*, or *karma yoga* with respect to the result, an action which is born of likes and dislikes becomes the means of eliminating the very likes and dislikes. The mind free from the reactions of success and failure is free from the agitations of elation and depression. Such a mind is tranquil. It is a contemplative mind. It can evaluate the results and learn.

One learns only when the mind is quiet. This is true of any knowledge: politics, science, finance or Vedanta. A quiet or a tranquil mind is the one that is not preoccupied by sorrow or elation. Such a mind can be alert. An action performed with an alert mind becomes beautiful. A simple action such as eating also becomes enjoyable if the mind is alert and conscious of the act of eating. A tranquil, alert, fresh, attentive mind is the mind that learns. But such a mind cannot be acquired as long as likes and dislikes have a hold on the mind. The seekers are advised to perform action with the attitude of *karma yoga*; do whatever must be done and accept the result as the *prasāda* from the Lord. There is no attachment to the result; that is, there is no insistence that the result should

प्रसादे सर्वदुःखानां हानिरस्योपजायते । (भ. गी. ॥-६५)

be in accordance with my expectation. Then the result loses the capacity to create any reactions and agitations in my mind. With this alert *buddhi* all the likes and dislikes are rendered ineffective like roasted seeds which cannot sprout. And this becomes the case with remaining likes and dislikes. So the *prasāda buddhi* is an insulation against the effects of likes and dislikes. Then I can learn from failure, can amend, can change the course of action and probably get the desired result next time. So I remain with myself moment to moment. A value is that which keeps me with myself and that is what *karma yoga* does. It does not let me project myself upon anything. One of the values that the Lord gives in the Bhagvad Gita, is to always maintain an equanimity of the mind while meeting the desirable or the undesirable.*

Action is recommended for everyone who entertains desires in the mind. We do not know all the varieties of likes and dislikes hidden in the mind; action is the only way for them to express themselves. They express as action every time and get neutralised. In course of time the mind becomes relatively quiet, freed from the hold of likes and dislikes. Such a mind discovers freedom.

Renunciation of Action

All over the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Kṛṣṇa keeps saying, "What is important is not the renunciation of action (*karmasannyāsa*) but rather the detachment from the fruits of action (*karmaphalatyāga*'). Not that the Lord does not talk about *sannyāsa* or renunciation, but the renunciation He talks about is that resulting from knowledge and that will happen by itself. An ignorant person cannot give up *karma* totally inasmuch as he or she can give up *karma* but not the notion of doership because of likes and dislikes. Total renunciation, characterised by the knowledge of the Self is the discovery of the fact that I am not the doer. The Lord repeatedly asserts two things; the vision of the

* नित्यं च समचित्तत्वमिष्टानिष्टोपपत्तिषु । (भ. गी. XIII-9)

Actionless Self in and through the action* and also the detachment from the result of the action. These are of the nature of *sādhya*—the end and the *sādhana*, the means, respectively. The end is the discovery of the fact that I do not perform any action; I being the awareness that activates the body, mind and intellect and which itself does not perform any action; like the sun that blesses all the activities on the earth, without taking part in any activity. That is its nature. So also I, the Self which is ever present, cannot but throw its light of awareness on whatever is in contact with it. Just as the iron becomes hot and brilliant in contact with fire, the intellect etc., become conscious due to the presence of the Self, which does not perform any action.

An ignorant person, not knowing the Self as *akartā* or non-doer, gives up action due to delusion, thinking that he or she will be an accomplished person merely by becoming a *karma-sannyāsī*. The one who has the notion of doership due to *dehātma-buddhi* or identification with the body, cannot totally give up action.** So the contention is between *karma yoga* and *sannyāsa* taken by will. Should I perform actions expected of me or should I give them up and pursue the knowledge? As long as there is this conflict, one should continue to work. A field of activity must be there where one can perform action and neutralise likes and dislikes. Human heart is bound to have likes and dislikes but they should not have the capacity to strike me down with sorrow, regrets or elation. Then I have done what needs to be done in terms of *sādhana*.

Renunciation of action is a natural consequence of *karma yoga*. When likes and dislikes are largely neutralised, the mind is no more troubled by the desire of acquiring happiness and security because it is itself cheerful and tranquil. At this stage, one is ready to renounce action. Action should be renounced only when it is no more necessary to perform them. *Sannyāsa* should not be taken by will but should be a natural outcome

* कर्मण्यकर्म यः पश्येत् । (भ. गी. IV-18)

** न हि देहभृता शक्यं त्यक्तुं कर्माण्यशेषतः ॥ (भ. गी. XVIII-11)

and an indication of a mature mind that is content with itself, that is not demanding nor dependent upon other things and beings for its happiness. If *sannyāsa* is taken without attaining this maturity of the mind, it amounts to shunning of the field of action which is necessary to neutralise likes and dislikes. Merely the cloth that denotes *sannyāsa* offers no fulfilment. Without *karma yoga* it is very difficult to achieve *sannyāsa** which stands for a mature mind. *Sannyāsa* of action indicates that the seeker is ready to pursue the knowledge of the Self to the exclusion of all other involvements. Pursuit of knowledge culminates in the attainment of the *sādhya* or the ultimate end which is the *sannyāsa* characterised by the knowledge of the Self.

* सन्न्यासस्तु महाबाहो दुःखमाप्तुमयोगतः । (भ. गी. V-7)



Values

Everyone loves happiness. Happiness is the most valuable thing for everyone. The happiness or *ānanda* is the very nature of the Self and one is able to experience that whenever the mind is quiet, content, non-projecting, free from likes and dislikes. When such a mind is obtained, I am with myself. So anything that makes me resolve into myself becomes an object of love. If an object stimulates the opposite aspects in me, I cannot give my heart to that object; it becomes an object of dislike, a source of unhappiness. It is not that the object has happiness or unhappiness; it is my own value structure because of which the object becomes instrumental in creating a mind that either keeps me with myself or causes me to deny myself. So the value for *ānanda*, the self, reflects into a value for a mind that is quiet and content, that keeps me with myself. When I enjoy such a state of mind, I am with myself, not dependant upon external objects and situations for happiness.

What are Values ?

The value of being with myself, of enjoying a tranquil mind, results in the various values of life, such as truthfulness, non-injury, compassion, etc.. *Karma yoga* also is a value with respect to performance of action, because it brings about a tranquil mind, free from likes and dislikes. Other values are also required by us to relate with people around us and to help us make the right choices under different conditions. Values are the guidelines for people in performing actions, in conducting business and in transacting with others. These guidelines are important because people are constantly faced with choices about what to do and what to avoid. One has to constantly make judgement and decide what is right and what is not. A lot of time and energy are very often wasted in conflicts and so values in the form of criteria or guidelines are very relevant in day-to-day living. By following values in life, the choices in

different situations are no more based on one's likes and dislikes but rather on the criteria supplied by the values. Values thus enable one to combat the reactions of likes and dislikes and in course of time, neutralise them so as to acquire a pure and tranquil mind.

Value of Values

Every scripture recommends values to be followed as *sādhana* or as qualities to be acquired by seekers. When it is understood that every value when analysed, ultimately leads to only one value, viz., acquiring a tranquil mind, the importance and the necessity of following the values can be appreciated. Otherwise values merely amount to mandates of do's and don't's. The main problem with the values is that they are adopted by people without discovering their value. I am a child and the father says, "Speak truth." I do not understand why I should speak truth or not speak untruth, but my mind is growing and so it accepts what the father says as a mandate. The father also does not make me discover the value of the value of speaking truth—it becomes a value only when I discover its value. But the father never explained probably because he thought I would not understand it, or may be he himself did not know it! So, speaking truth becomes a mandate—it remains an unassimilated value which I cannot relate to my day-to-day living. So also is the case with other values recommended by scriptures and so the scriptures do not seem to have value in my day-to-day living.

The value of speaking truth is again confirmed by the teachers and the elders and so I adopt it. I speak truth but the relevance of truth in life is not understood.

As I grow up, I pick up the value for money, power etc.. As a child, I observe that money buys chocolates, toys, etc.. Subsequently I discover that money is needed for leading life, for gaining pleasures and security and so on. So is the case with power; what can be done by power cannot even be done by money. This is an observed fact and so I discover a value for power. Hence money, power, etc., are values to me

because I have discovered them to be valuable. These are assimilated values and not merely mandates. So if acquiring money and power involves speaking untruth, I speak that because they are valuable to me. Speaking truth is only an obligation to parents, teachers, society, etc., while money, etc., is my personal, private, assimilated value. What chance do truth, duty, etc., have when I have value for money, power, friends and influence? They have no chance because I have discovered values for money, etc., and not for truth, etc.. The modern society gives importance to winning friends and influencing people and so I adopt them; speaking truth is practised as long as it is convenient—as long as it does not come in the way of my valuable pursuits. The value for money and the like always has the last laugh and truth always suffers; it has a place only as long as other values are not disturbed. Convenience becomes the ruling norm and not truth. This is the problem because I was given only do's and don't's and I grew up without knowing the value of the values.

Unassimilated values create conflicts and a feeling of guilt. When I do not have the strength of conviction to sacrifice money, pleasure, etc., in order to follow a value, I feel guilty because I am not able to follow what is considered to be an accepted moral conduct. I continue to suffer from the guilt-complex or altogether give up the attempt to follow the moral standard.

The value of the values must be understood in order to assimilate the values. A value is a value only when the value of the value is valuable to me. A simple tranquil mind is the most valuable thing to me because that is what I am trying to gain through all the pursuits in life. So the value that enables me to acquire such a state of mind should be the most valuable thing to me. Only if I discover that the value of speaking truth is more than, or at least equal to that of money, will I not barter the truth for the sake of money. After all, money is for my sake. I want money because I want to be with myself by being comfortable. I will give up money if it creates discomfort for the mind. For example, if it is necessary to give an account for every piece of belonging you have, you would

rather give up comforts than be subjected to the embarrassment of not being able to account for them. You don't want to be bothered or irritated. You would rather get rid of a thing if it does not let you be comfortable with yourself.

This is true of other things in life too. I don't want to be subject to discomfort or be irritated because I then am denied the peace of mind that I really value the most. On all occasions of choice, I have been instinctively adopting a choice that, in my opinion, will let me remain with myself. But this fact is not clearly recognised. I don't realise that it is not for the sake of money, power, etc., that I want them, but it is for *my* sake that I want them. I have been assigning a wrong value to money, power, etc., thinking that they bring happiness by themselves. In reality they are valuable only if they bring about a tranquil mind and not otherwise. When this fact is understood, the false estimation of money, power, etc., drops off and the value for truth, etc., which brings about a tranquil mind, is established.

Everyone instinctively has value for truth, non-injury and all other values because they are in keeping with one's nature and one instinctively knows that they enable one to enjoy the peace of mind. Whenever this instinctive value which is not intellectually assimilated, is pitted against the false, but assimilated values for money and the like, a conflict arises. The value of the values such as truthfulness, non-injury, etc., must be understood and assimilated in order to avoid internal conflicts and yield the peace of mind. Let us take the case of *satya* or truthfulness, to see how it leads to the value of keeping me with myself and how untruth robs the peace of mind.

Satya or Truthfulness

Truth is my nature and I instinctively have value for it. In most cases, I also know what the truth is in a given situation and so when I have to speak a falsehood, it creates a split within me. Truth is clearly known to me while a lie has to be made up. Speaking untruth makes me a *kartā* or a deliberate doer of false action at the level of the organ of speech. As a knower, I know the truth, but as a speaker or the doer of the action

of speaking, I do just the opposite. And there is only one entity that is both the knower and the doer, thinker and enjoyer and that is "I". The same "I" knows and acts and experiences emotions. A split is created in "I" whenever the doer poses as different from the thinker or the knower. This split is not comfortable but in course of time, it becomes a habit. A time comes when every time I want to do something, the thinker decides one thing but the doer does something else. I find myself a person who cannot do what I want to do. When the doer and the thinker form a single unit entity, they are in alignment, there is no guilt or fear; but when there is a split between them there is a feeling of guilt or fear. There arises a judgement about myself. Then I judge myself as a person who cannot do what I want to do. That is the greatest harm I can bring to myself. There is looking down upon myself. I cannot be an *adhikārī* or a fit person for Vedanta, or anything else for that matter. So what is valuable—money, or speaking truth? When this is understood, speaking truth will never be compromised. Speaking truth becomes a value for me only when the value of truth is valuable to me. Otherwise, it remains an unassimilated float-sam in the mind and creates conflicts. Speaking truth with understanding and conviction maintains an alignment in thought and action, avoids conflicts and agitations and brings about a tranquil mind.

In the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Kṛṣṇa gives a check-list of values which a spiritual seeker should follow to attain a pure, tranquil mind fit for the study of the scriptures. Some of these values are analysed here to show how each of them helps one follow one's true nature, avoid conflicts and enjoy a tranquil mind.

Ahiṁsā or Non-injury

Ahiṁsā is the attitude that arises from the appreciation of the fact that I should not hurt anybody because I do not like to be hurt by anybody. If you are considerate to yourself, you will be considerate to others. Man is insensitive to others when he is insensitive to himself. For example, I cannot use bad words for others if I do not like them. Life is a series of small things

and so change has to come about in me and not in others. If one knows one will be sorrowful by doing something, one will stop doing it. A person who is alive, sensitive and considerate to himself or herself will also be sensitive and considerate to others and will not treat others in the way he or she does not like to be treated. We generally escape from ourselves when we hurt others because we have not assimilated the value of being hurt. We try to escape from what we are and so we do not learn. We continue to hurt others any number of times, because we have not learnt what it is to be hurt. Non-injury can therefore be defined as being sensitive to the rights and points of view of others, including members of animal and plant kingdoms. In nature's creation, one life depends upon another, but deliberate injury beyond one's need is *himsā* or injury.

We can injure someone through body, speech or the mind. Non-injury at the body level is easy but practice at the level of speech requires control over the tongue. It is said that one must speak truth which does not hurt others, and which is at the same time pleasant and also beneficial to others*. So even while speaking truth, one should not hurt the feelings of others. Such a rule will keep speaking to a minimum.

Non-injury at the thought level is not to entertain a bad or a negative thought about another person. This is more difficult than the non-injury at the other two levels.

Practising non-injury makes me sensitive to myself, makes me own up myself. Sensitivity is the strength of human beings.

Amānitvam or Absence of Pride

Amānitvam is the absence of pride and haughtiness. A proud person demands respect. Such a person does possess some qualifications but expects others to recognise and respect him or her. This desire for respect comes out of a sense of insufficiency with oneself. I want to keep others under my spell by maintaining an air. Then my happiness depends upon others

* अनुद्वेगकरं वाक्यं सत्यं प्रियहितं च यत् । (भ. गी. XVII-15)

giving me the respect. Lack of favourable response gives rise to anger and agitations. I should know that a respect given upon demand is not real respect. A person in authority does get salutations from people around but when he or she loses power, we have to see how much respect he or she can gain. Respect should be commanded and not demanded. A person like Mahatma Gandhi would be respected whether or not he is in power because such a person commands respect as a person and not because of position or power which are incidental. It is like a rose flower which commands respect rather than demands it. If this is understood, I will never demand respect; then alone I will be with myself. If I demand respect, I will be with others because I would be worried about who respected me and who did not. You have no time to think of anything at all. Command respect if you have something—like a flower which is with itself with its fragrance and commands respect.

I should be happy with what I have. If it brings respect, well and good. If it does not bring respect, that should not disturb my peace of mind because I am happy with what I am and not because of what other people make me to be. I should be content with myself. This attitude of humility helps me retain a peaceful disposition of the mind, to remain with myself.

Adambhitvam or Unpretentiousness

Dambhitvam means pretending to be other than what one is and *adambhitvam* means absence of pretentiousness. Whereas a proud person expects to be respected for what he or she is, a pretentious person shows off more than what he or she is. One pretends to be great by making a show with the help of clothes, make-up, diction and so on. One tells lies to cover up deficiencies, making them instead, appear as qualifications. Thus we find that people commonly lie about their age, salary, qualifications, etc., in order to maintain a certain assumed status or to keep a certain company. This arises out of a feeling of inadequacy with oneself, because of which a wrong value is assigned to the status. A man who lies to people about himself has to remember and keep track of all the different lies

he has told. He is manipulating all the time. By telling lies and pretending to be different from what he really is, he creates a split within himself. He always remains away from himself. When he cannot hope to be with himself, how can he ever think of the Self? On the other hand, one who faces oneself and owns up the limitations, avoids personality disintegration.

Kṣānti or Accomodation

Observance of *ahimsā* or non-injury makes one a sensitive person. Sensitivity shows up as the ability to make fine distinctions and so, more sensitive a person is, more likely he or she is to get upset by the behaviour of others. Others generally cannot meet with his or her expectations and so such a person is prone to react to the behaviour of others. Therefore it becomes necessary to follow another value, viz., *kṣānti* or accommodation or forbearance which is an attitude because of which one is able to maintain a poise of mind even when there is a reason to get upset. *Kṣānti* calls for an accommodation for the faults and limitations of others.

We should remember that everyone is struggling with his or her own limitations and trying to cope with the mind. In the process, everyone reacts to the world. Such reactions cannot be taken seriously. Once the cause for the reaction of other people is understood, it will arouse only sympathy, not anger. Every situation must be examined from the point of view of the other person. Then a sympathetic attitude of helping others will arise. Since I like to be accommodated, I should accommodate others. Forbearance helps one maintain a balanced attitude, a mind in poise.

Ārjavam or Straightforwardness

Ārjavam is freedom from angularities, freedom from scheming. It is straightforwardness, openness and frankness possible only for one who maintains an alignment between thought, word and deed. It is possible for the one who is truthful, who accepts oneself as one is, who owns up to both limitations and abilities. *Ārjavam* enables one to remain with oneself.

Assimilation of values

I cannot give up something that is valuable. I follow a value because it is myself. Let us say that you are hungry for three days and you notice a piece of bread in a garbage-can. Will you put your hand in the garbage-can and pick up the piece of bread? You will not. It is better to remain hungry than to eat that; that much sense of hygiene and dignity has grown upon you. You are not obliging somebody else by not picking up the bread from the garbage. It would have been quite different if, not picking up from the garbage was to oblige your father or someone else.

Satya, ahimsā, etc. are not followed by people because there are other values which are better assimilated and which are opposed to these values and so there is no chance for *satya* etc.. A conflict arises in the mind because my behaviour is opposed to my nature. On the other hand, the value of not picking up from the garbage has grown upon me, it has been assimilated and so it is followed in spite of the fact that the stomach is demanding food. There is no conflict in my mind in following this assimilated value even though my hunger is not appeased. Similarly, when I discover the value of the value, when the value becomes personally valuable to me, valuable in my life, there is no conflict.

I can follow *ahimsā* or non-injury when it is clear to me that I do not want to be hurt by anybody and so I cannot hurt anyone. "I won't hurt anyone" or "I should not hurt anyone" is a response to a mandate. "I cannot hurt anyone," is an assimilated value. "It is not possible for me to speak untruth," is an assimilated value. If in spite of listening to Vedanta for a long time, there is no appreciable change in someone, it is only because these values are float-sams in the mind; they are not integrated, not assimilated. If I say, "I will be straightforward," I am obliging somebody. If I cannot but be straightforward, it is an assimilated value.

If I require a reminder to speak truth, it will not work when it is not convenient. Values written and kept on the desk to remind me, make me only a mediocre person because I go

on obliging somebody and as a result get frustrated. One should not oblige others—values should become a part of the personality.

A value is assimilated when one can follow it naturally. In the beginning one has to deliberate in speaking truth because doing so probably involves some sacrifice. But when the value is followed consistently and the value for the peace of mind resulting from following it is appreciated, speaking truth becomes natural. Then one cannot but speak truth. Then it is no more a value; it is one's own nature. Every value should be assimilated in this manner.

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Since every value aims at only one objective—permitting one to remain with oneself—no one value can be followed as an isolated value. Speaking truth will require one to be unpretentious and practising non-injury will require one to be accommodative. All the values are interrelated. In fact, they are all one value—the value for a simple tranquil mind—looked at from different points of view.

Every value throws you on your own lap. Life becomes simple. A mind that enjoys values in an assimilated form is a pure mind, *śuddha antaḥkaraṇa*. That mind can appreciate the fact of its being *ānanda*, when that fact is revealed or unfolded to it. Such a person is an *adhikārī*, the one qualified to learn and appreciate Vedānta.

Viksepa or Distraction

The obstacles

The obstacles which deny me what I want to be, deny myself to me, are *āvaraṇa* (ignorance), *mala* (impurity) and *vikṣepa* (distraction). To remove *āvaraṇa* which covers the vision of myself, I carry out *vicāra*, enquiry with the help of *śruti* or scriptures. *Vicāra*, is the enquiry into the nature of the self, the world and also the creator of the world. All the three aspects must be analysed and understood because each one is connected with the other two. This is possible only when the mind enjoys a certain purity, a maturity which is the relative freedom from the impurity of likes and dislikes. For achieving such a purity, the best available means is *karma yoga*.

"Worshipping Him with one's own duty, one attains purification of the mind." Whatever is to be done should be done with the attitude of worship, with the attitude of duty. With this attitude, likes and dislikes, picked up consciously and unconsciously get neutralised in time. That is the purification of the mind. Elimination of likes and dislikes or *mala* from the mind by proper attitude towards action is the *sādhana* that qualifies one for abidence in the knowledge.

Now we come to the third factor, distraction or lack of steadiness of the mind.

Mind is not a Problem

It is the nature of the mind to change and to change fast. It is only natural if someone complains that the mind keeps on changing. If the mind does not change quickly, cognition of the previous object would not quickly go away from the mind and the cognition of the next object would not take place to keep up with the rapidly changing external objects. An object creates a relevant thought form or a *vṛtti* which is what one sees, and that is how perception takes place. When I see my

friend, the friend-thought takes place. Now if I see a buffalo walking behind the friend, buffalo-thought should take place. But if the friend-thought does not go away quickly, the two thoughts will be mixed up and I will have the perception of the friend, that is somehow confused with the buffalo.

If the mind does not move fast, you cannot have distinct forms of perception. The mind must change and change quickly and completely, without leaving even a trace of the previous cognition. Then only can there be the perception of an object as it is. It should always be fresh. Knowledge cannot have features of an object other than the one that is being perceived. Cognition should be as true as the object because otherwise correct knowledge will not take place. Then only is a true memory possible because one can recall an object in its true form.

So the fact that the mind changes, is a blessing. Perception is also not a problem because human being has sense organs and there are corresponding sense objects in the world. So that is also a blessing. If we want a mind that is insensitive to perception, it is of no practical use. Even now, when I see the sky, the stars, the sun, there is no problem. So the fact that I perceive the sky, is not a problem. Thought itself is not a problem because every object creates a relevant thought and so the sky-thought is not a problem. Thinking is not a problem nor is inquiry or discovery a problem. Memory is not a problem; problem arises when one does not have good memory. Thus a changing mind, perceptions, thoughts, memories—none of these is a problem for the human being. What creates problem is something else—it is the incapacity of the mind to abide in itself when you want it to abide.

Mechanicalness is the Problem

We do not have the knowledge of the ways of the mind. The mind seems to have its own ways over which I have no mastery. So thinking or perception is not a problem, but lack of alertness, lack of mastery over the ways of the mind and my awareness of this lack —this is the problem. Thinking seems to happen by itself —we have no control over the ways of thinking. Take the example of a conversation with a friend.

In one hour, you discuss a number of topics and problems but you do not know the turn the mind takes from one topic to another. What you seem to care for is the time but not what you talk. You are led from one topic to another. There is nothing wrong with changing the topics or conversing but you must be aware of the links —how one topic led to another. Very often you cannot recollect what all topics you discussed. Sometimes you cannot even remember how the conversation began. The turn in topics took place not because of your will, but because the wheel of conversation turned by itself —just as in driving you take turns unconsciously and drive on different roads. This is true of all of our activities in life—we allow things to happen only by accident and not by deliberate control.

A distracted mind is not efficient. Even for worldly achievements such as gaining wealth or fame or power, one needs a mind relatively free from distraction, capable of consistently working toward the chosen goal. If in the process of pursuing the goal, the mind gets distracted by itself or buffeted easily by small disappointments, one cannot achieve anything. A distracted mind is the biggest problem in meditation. The mind soon drifts away. When one begins to think of God, one thinks of anything but God! Though one begins all right, the mind moves to other topics in spite of one's will. This also happens in day-to-day life. It happens even to speakers, teachers, etc. Such a person is not *yukta*, a self-controlled one. A *yukta* is the one who knows the ways of the mind. It is not that man is not capable of commanding silence, but he does not have the mastery over the ways of his mind. Mechanicalness is the problem.

If you are alert during the day and aware of the link from one topic to another, you are conscious and are free to change the topic as you like. As long as you drive the car, there is no problem, but let the car not drive you because then accidents are sure to happen. Mind is only an instrument in your hand and you must make use of it, you must command it. But it does not seem to be so. It is like the dog whom my neighbour takes for a morning walk; in the beginning she takes

the dog for a walk and after a while the dog takes her for a walk. If we let the mind as it likes, we lose the will, the awareness over the mind. It becomes mechanical. Thinking or perception is not the problem but mechanicalness in the ways of thinking is the problem. Mechanical mind makes the life also mechanical. Chance alone makes things happen. A moment of peace and silence happens only by chance.

Silence is the Nature

Silence is the innate nature of the mind which enjoys the capacity to think. When the mind does not think, it is all silence. We need not think or do anything for silence. For example, during this talk, if you receive the words as they come, you don't think and the mind is silent. The only thing you do is not to do anything. On the other hand, you must do something to be restless, to be sad; you must think of a topic or a thing or a being that causes restlessness, and build upon it. Silence is a state of mind when you have nothing to think about. So what is natural: silence or agitation? Silence is natural. Sorrow or sadness is something one has to work upto. However agitated one is, one does become silent now and then because silence is the nature of the mind.

Distraction

So I need not do anything, work-up to anything to be silent because silence is my nature. Desiring to be myself is not a problem. It is the indisciplined ways of thinking, the mind's going from one thing to another that is the problem. This is *vikṣepa* or distraction. There is no *vikṣepa* without being mechanical. If the mind is agitated, it can become silent, but here the mind is agitation alone. Arjuna says to Lord Kṛṣṇa, "The mind is agitation itself, and it is turbulent, powerful and unyielding."*

* चञ्चलं हि मनः कृष्ण प्रमाथि बलवद्दृढम् । (भ. गी. VI-34)

I want to think of one thing and it engages in something else and I go along with it. If it informs me and then goes, it is all right. But it goes away without my consent. If I remember it has gone away without permission, I can watch it, but it makes me forget myself and takes me for a ride. The mind as though hypnotises me, puts me to sleep and walks away. It is only when, in the course of its own meandering paths, the mind comes back by itself to the object of meditation that I become awake, I realise that I was lost.

Most of you must be doing some meditation. You know the meditative posture, etc.. But more often than not, at the end of meditation, you are more tense, agitated, guilty than when you went in for meditation. Meditation only seems to tell you how helpless you are. You wish to repeat a *mantra*, but you end up repeating anything but the *mantra*. At the end of the half-hour, you are furious and you blame others for your failure, like a dancer who does not know how to dance and blames the surface of the platform. The real problem is the mechanicalness of your mind.

When the mind goes away, I also go along with it. Or I fall asleep because I am not conscious of what is happening. So the meditator is told to bring back the mind as it goes away. But bringing back the mind and holding it in silence is easier said than done. When the mind wanders, I am not there to catch it and bring it back. I go all over the world and come back. The meditation becomes a tiresome thing and everyday I develop a degree of guilt, develop more and more tension. I am angrier and more frustrated. So we have to take some steps to see that slowly we gain the mastery over the mind.

Upasana or Meditation

Mechanicalness is a reaction

Distraction is mainly because of the mechanicalness in one's ways of thinking. If I am aware of the happenings in the mind, there will be no mechanicalness in my thinking. When I lose the hold over the ways of thinking, it takes place without my being conscious of what is happening. Any form of reaction, a psychological reaction is mechanical, not deliberate. Action is deliberate; reaction is not. If you deliberately hit someone for what the person did, it is an action, although it may not be right. But if you hit that person without deliberation, you have no control over that action and it amounts to a reaction. There is choice when you act but there is no choice when you react. A psychological reaction is born out of mechanicalness, out of impulse and the faculty of choice does not come into play at that time. If you act deliberately, you can have a choice and can change the course of action if necessary.

Human being is gifted with the ability to choose the action but that does not happen when you react, when you act mechanically. You are a conscious being enjoying a faculty of choice. All the actions should be blessed by reasoning or the faculty of choice. Every action should have the sanction, should have the signature of your reasoning. Your action can be unreasonable, but then you can learn. A deliberate action can be a ground for change but we don't change in spite of experiences in life because we mostly react and not act. Everything is a happening when you lose yourself. Later on, in a spell of anger, which is a physicalised response to a psychological reaction, there is a regret for what has happened. If I go on reacting in my life out of jealousy or anger, I become an automaton, a robot who is set to certain reactions. Anyone can make me angry in no time because they know how I will react. In spite of the blessing of the faculty of choice, man loses his

status of a human being and becomes an automaton. And he does not act as a machine all the time nor as a conscious being all the time. Sometimes he is deliberate and sometimes mechanical and so nobody can predict how he will react. He becomes an unpredicable creature because there is no reason behind his impulses.

Auto-suggestion

So *vikṣepa* is born out of one's incapacity to control the happenings of the mind. Generally we react and react again over the reactions and thus create a chain of reactions. If one assimilates a defect, one can learn from it and improve next time. Suppose you take a vow of not being angry today—it is an auto-suggestion—it can work if you are convinced that anger is an enemy which should be avoided. Anger happens due to mechanicalness and it will come—in spite of the resolve, because mechanicalness has been there for a long time. After the anger has been expressed and the damage is done, you realise that you have been angry. Rather than regret, you hope for better luck next time. As you have realised the value of being free from anger, you should not regret. Then the auto-suggestion will also rise alongwith you and you will realise that you are getting angry. Before anger shows its ugly face, you can see it coming and you are ready to receive it. You can receive anger with a smiling face.

Alertness, a Sādhana

One should become alert or conscious to avoid anger. And one thing includes many others. Just as the rest of the legs of a cot get pulled when we pull one leg, many things get tackled when you tackle one thing, because all reactions are born of mechanicalness. This is *sādhana*. *Sādhana* is not merely sitting in a place and doing meditation. Half-an-hour of meditation cannot help the rest of the day. There is some result for what you do but it is not appreciable because you are doing it casually. We cannot compartmentalise the life into "casual" and "serious." Life is a series of experiences and such compartments are meaningless. We cannot divide life as business, family, spiritual, material, etc.. Life is a whole and it

cannot be compartmentalised. Everyone is a combination of materialistic, spiritual, etc.. and so everything should be taken either seriously or casually. Nothing is more profound or more profane than the other. Inasmuch as Brahman is the substratum of everything, everything is profound and inasmuch as everything is *mithyā*, unreal, it is all profane. A spiritual person is the one who tries to solve the problems deliberately while one with a restless mind does not know what is happening. If every turn on the mind is noted, mechanicalness is gone. If we take note of the various reactions that happen day-to-day, the day-to-day life becomes conscious.

In daily life, mechanicalness is reflected in all activities. This is why guidelines are given in the scriptures for even such activities as eating, working, sleeping, etc.. One must become conscious in all such activities, do exactly what is required. It is alertness that is important and not merely observing a rule. For example, waking up at four o'clock in the morning is good but if one is sleepy for the rest of the day, no purpose is served by waking up early. One must find one's own time so that one is alert during the day. Such instructions are also found regarding eating—"Fill one half of the stomach with food, a quarter with water and leave the remaining quarter for the movement of air.*" Lord Kṛṣṇa also says in the Bhagavad Gita, "The one who is conscious in eating and movement, the one who is conscious in activity, the one who is conscious in sleep and in remaining awake, for that one the *yoga* removes pain.**" The *yoga* or *sādhana* becomes meaningful only when alertness is maintained in all the activities; neither overdoing would help nor not-doing.

Upāsanā or Meditation—The Posture

Meditation becomes easier when the mind is relatively free from likes and dislikes as a result of a life of *karma yoga* and

* पूरयेदशनेनार्धं तृतीयमुदकेन तु ।
वायोः सञ्चरणार्थाय चतुर्थमवशेषयेत् ॥

** युक्ताहारविहारस्य युक्तचेष्टस्य कर्मसु ।
युक्तस्वप्नावबोधस्य योगो भवति दुःखहा ॥ (भ. गी. VI-17)

other values and free from distraction as a result of an alert life. Some indications are given in the Gita about the seat and the posture for meditation, but these are pointers and not rules. It is said, "Use a place that is not high or low, spread a mat, deerskin and a piece of cloth (to prevent dampness from affecting you)."* It is also said, "Sit in a posture in which the head, the neck and the trunk are in one line and with the body and the mind steady."** No specific posture is prescribed, but if one is able to sit in a given posture for 45 minutes, the physical body does not become a source of distraction during meditation. This can be accomplished in course of time.

Invoking the Lord

After sitting for meditation, place the hands in the lap, lock the fingers, relax the body, close the eyes and turn the mind away from the sense objects. The mind is withdrawn from external engagements and is available for whatever you want to do. With the quiet, tranquil mind, invoke the Lord; appreciate the One from Whom everything has come, by Whom everything is sustained and unto Whom everything goes back.***

That Lord is invoked during meditation. Everything is an expression of the Lord because He is the efficient and the material cause of the whole creation. That is the reason why when we offer *modaka* to Lord Gaṇapati, He does not seem to take anything. He being the material cause, nothing is different from Him, away from Him just as my hand cannot be taken by me. And so truly speaking we can choose any altar or symbol for invoking the Lord. But for practical reasons we invoke the Lord in an object that is free from likes and dislikes. The form in which I invoke the Lord does not matter because *sahasranāma* (thousand names) of any deity essentially describes the same

नात्युच्छ्रितं नातिनीचं चैलाजिनकुशोत्तरम् (भ. गी. VI-11)

* समं कायशिरोग्रीवं धारयन्नचलं स्थिरः । (भ. गी. VI-13)

** यतो वा इमानि भूतानि जायन्ते । येन जातानि जीवन्ति ।

यत्प्रयन्त्यभिसंविशन्ति । (तै. उ. III-1-1)

Lord from whom the creation has emerged, by Whom it is sustained and unto Whom it goes back. Because of our *saṁskāra* or up-bringing, the appreciation of the Lord takes place by the very idol. Otherwise one needs to be educated into what the idol stands for. A *sādhū* (saint) or a child often becomes an object of worship because they do not have likes and dislikes. Any other person or object can also become object of worship if it is above likes and dislikes. So one chooses an object or an altar which is free from likes and dislikes and in whom one can invoke the Lord because of the *saṁskāra*.

By invoking the Lord, the one who is a *rāgī* and *dveṣī* (the proud ego that entertains *rāga* and *dveṣa*) surrenders. In the very appreciation of the Lord as the substratum of the creation, as the self of all, as the omniscient, the omnipotent, there is a surrender to Him and the one that surrenders is the ego, that is, the *rāgī* and *dveṣī*. The assertion of the asserting ego is eliminated and what remains is an humble ego which is worshipping, prayerful, devoted. And what is an ego that is not asserting? So the pride is taken care of.

Mental Worship

The next step is to offer mental worship. Set the mind to the *iṣṭa devatā* or the chosen deity or the altar. Offer the mental worship. *Śivamānasapūjā* (mental worship to Lord Śiva) composed by Śrī Śaṅkarācārya is a typical example of mental worship. The first verse says, "The seat decked with jewels, the bath with cool water, divine garments decorated with varieties of gems, the sandal paste flavoured with *kastūrī*, the garland of flowers such as *jātī*, *campaka*, *bilva*, etc., the incense and the showing of light; O Lord of beings, O Ocean of Compassion, kindly accept this worship conceived by me in my mind." We honour the Lord as we would a revered guest. So create an altar of the Lord in the mind. Offer the very best and the offering can be as elaborate as you like. In the next verse, Śrī Śaṅkarācārya says, "The *pāyasam* (pudding) in a bowl made of gold and decked with jewels, the five varieties of eatables including milk and curd, the plantain fruit, the sweetened water, variety of cooked vegetables, clean drinking water fragrant with

camphor and the tām̐būla—all this has been prepared and presented mentally, O Lord, kindly accept them.” See vividly whatever you offer; nothing is taken for granted. Every action is vividly taken into account. The mental worship is concluded with prostration in which the whole body falls before the Lord.

Japa, repetition of a Mantra

The next step is japa or repetition of a mantra. Due to *vikṣepa* or distraction, the mind moves from one object to another by association. One thought leads to another because everything in the creation is connected to everything else; pot-clay-earth-elements-creation. Everything is interrelated. The mind goes from one object to another by association. For example, from the chanting of the *mantra*—*om namaḥ śivāya*, the mind goes to a person called Śivarām and from there to my absence in the office, then to my home, to my son, to his marriage, to the astrologer and so on. There is a possibility of the mind’s coming back to the *mantra* but nobody knows when. An object can start any thought pattern. The thought patterns are built in the mind and the mind keeps moving from one thought to another without being aware of it.

Even though objects are many because of which the thoughts are also constantly flowing, there is a gap between any two successive thoughts. We do not notice this gap because the thought flow is rapid. But there is a stage between any two thoughts when there is no tangible thought. Am I present when there is no thought? Yes, I am present in the form of the thought-free state; formless, silence, awareness I am. In that gap, I exist as silence, *śānti*, peace. Now I am thought, now silence. I am thus thought, silence, thought, silence—this is how thinking goes. If I am silence before the thought, silence after the thought, am I not the silence during the thought also? Am I essentially of the nature of thought or that of silence? If I am thought, thought should always exist, because I am always there. The thought should not change. But the object of thought keeps on changing while I am the constant entity knowing the thoughts I entertain. And there is no difference in the silence between different sets of thoughts. So I am

silence even when I think. With respect to the mind, I am thought but without thought, I am silence. I am silence, free from distraction but due to mechanicalness, I get distracted from the silence and lose myself in thoughts.

In order to avoid mechanicalness so that I can own up myself that is silence, I do something special; repetition of the name of the Lord. In *japa* one repeats the same *mantra* again and again, not mechanically but consciously. Take for example the *mantra*, *om namaḥ śivāya* (Prostrations to Lord Śiva who is Om or Brahman). Mentally chant this *mantra* and do not go to the next repetition without seeing and owning up the silence between the two chants. When the thoughts are dissimilar, a chain is created, but there cannot be a chain when the thoughts are the same. In *japa*, the same name or *mantra* is repeated so as to avoid the possibility of a build-up, association and development of the thought patterns. Each chanting is complete and nothing needs to follow it, and so the chain of association is broken when the same thought is repeated. When *japa* is performed with the knowledge of the *śāstra* or scriptures, you can own up the silence. By being aware of the silence between two successive chants, you avoid being mechanical and you will find that the mind abides naturally in the silence. If you own up the silence between two chants constantly, in course of time, you will find that chants become sandwiched between the silence which is the first and the last. The thought-silence-thought pattern changes to silence-thought-silence pattern. And there is silence when I do not think. This is the natural silence and the silence continues. If a thought arises, you can bring back the *mantra*. Bring back the *mantra* when a dissimilar thought arises. This process of *japa* constantly enables you to become familiar with yourself, be at home with yourself that is silence, full.

Meditation keeps me with myself. *Japa* itself becomes meditation because it takes me to myself. It destroys the mechanicalness of the mind, it takes me to myself and keeps me with myself. And due to the name of the Lord and the attitude of devotion and surrender associated with it, the ego is destroyed.

Lord Kṛṣṇa says, "Among the *yajñas*, I am the *japa yajña*.""* The distraction, the restlessness of the mind is eliminated by *japa*.

Conclusion

The one end everyone is seeking in life is to be free, complete, full. But freedom is the innate nature of every being and so what denies me the freedom is the ignorance of the nature of the Self. Self-ignorance or *āvaraṇa* is thus the primary obstacle that denies me myself and that is removed by the knowledge of the Self gained as a result of *vicāra* or enquiry into the Self by analysis of the scriptural teachings unfolded by the teacher. This is the primary *sādhana* for knowing the Self, for gaining freedom.

If ignorance of the Self were the only obstacle, listening to the teacher should be able to eliminate it. In most cases, in spite of the listening and even following the teacher's reasoning, one is unable to clearly see the meaning of the words. Since the present vision of the self is quite opposite to what the scriptures reveal, the mind distorts the meaning of the words and interprets the teaching differently from what is really meant. This is because two additional, secondary obstacles are also present in the mind. These are *mala* or impurity in the form of likes and dislikes and *vikṣepa* or distraction or restlessness of the mind. Two secondary means or *sādhana*s are recommended for the elimination of these two secondary obstacles. These means are the *karma yoga* and other values for the elimination of *mala* and *upāsana* that is worship and *japa* for the elimination of *vikṣepa*.

By *karma yoga* and values or *dharma*, I destroy the impurities and by worship and *japa*, I destroy the distraction and restlessness. These together comprise the secondary means which are as important as the primary means. My enquiry or *vicāra* continues with the study of the *śāstra* and so finally the *āvaraṇa* or the Ignorance also gets eliminated. By these *sādhana*s, I take care of all the problems of limitation and sorrow and come to know and appreciate that I am the complete, limitless Being that I have been searching all my life.

* यज्ञानां जपयज्ञोऽस्मि । (भ. गी. X-25)

A demanding person
makes a distinction
between him & nature

Whole thing makes you happy

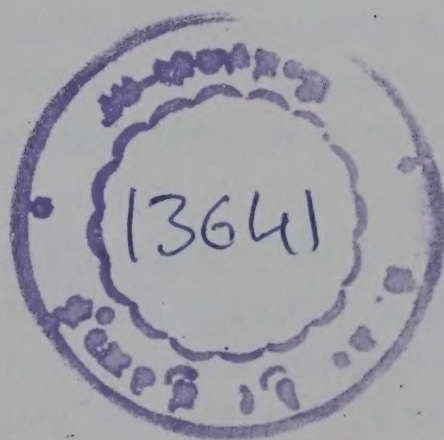
happiest doesn't come
from within & without

This knowledge is learned from - Himself

It is not experiential - (Impulse is shown)

The one who tries to find outside Sukha
is Bhogya

u ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ Inside is Gya
u ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ neither inside nor
outside is Gya



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